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BREAKERS AHEAD



OR
UNCLE JACK'S STORIES OF
GREAT SHIPWRECKS
OF RECENT TIMES

BY

MRS. SARGENT



600038808X



FOUNDERING OF THE "LA PLATA."

Page 66.

BREAKERS AHEAD;

OR,

UNCLE JACK'S STORIES OF
GREAT SHIPWRECKS OF RECENT TIMES:
1869 to 1880.

BY

MRS. SAXBY,
AUTHOR OF "ROCK-BOUND," "STORIES OF SHETLAND."
ETC. ETC.

"'Tis pleasant by the cheerful hearth to hear
Of tempests and the dangers of the deep,
And pause at times, and feel that we are safe,
Then listen to the perilous tale again."



London:

T. NELSON AND SONS, PATERNOSTER ROW.
EDINBURGH; AND NEW YORK.

1882.

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Dedicated

TO

CONSTANCE EMILY SHORE,

MY "SAILOR" FRIEND.



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BREAKERS AHEAD.

CHAPTER I.

“I shall no more to sea, to sea.”—*Tempest*.

 O listen to the narrative of stirring adventures connected with maritime life ; to dwell upon the incidents which attend them until I almost seem to have shared in the perils of the hour ; to repeat those hair-breadth escapes and thrilling tales of Father Neptune's dominions to an eager audience of lads and lasses, is as good a substitute for actual sea-life as a maimed, weather-worn tar can hope to enjoy. And that is what I have been doing for ten years past ; in fact, ever since the time when I hauled up my old hulk at home and submitted to the inevitable.

I do not like to tell you how many noted shipwrecks I can remember, for that would be letting you into the secret of my age. Moreover, I do not believe that your interest would care to go back into the dim past. I find that young folks of this present practical age prefer

stories of their own time to any other ; therefore my yarns only stretch over the last decade—the period, in fact, which has passed since I was obliged to give up my much-loved profession.

Perhaps I cannot introduce my stories better than by informing you of my own last voyage. I did not know that it was to be my last, and I was very far from desiring that it should ; but "man proposes and God disposes."

In my youth I always contrived to sail in a ship bound for some far-distant land ; for I had a passion for seeing new, strange countries, and it was always a delight to me when I heard that I was not to return to civilized parts for perhaps two or three years. But when I got up in years, though my love of travel did not abate, I found that ship-owners preferred younger men for such work, and I generally got shoved into some vessel trading near home. If I had not marred my own prospects in life by running off to sea when I was a mere child, I might have been commanding one of Her Majesty's ships of war, as my nephew Jack hopes to do some day. But I lost my chance, and never got higher than the merchant service. Thus one false step made in early youth took from me the very prize for which I hoped and strove, and which I fondly believed I was bringing within my reach by that same act of foolishness.

In the autumn of 1869 I found myself on board the *Princess Royal* in the capacity of captain. My ship was a somewhat weather-beaten barque, bound for Russia, with a mixed cargo. We were to bring back wood. Besides the crew of eighteen men, there were on board the wife and daughters of an English merchant, residents in Archangel, who had been visiting their old home, and were returning with us to the land of their adoption. Our ship had few conveniences for the comfort of passengers, but we rigged up the largest cabin for the ladies, and they seemed quite accustomed to "roughing it," so that we were not troubled by the unreasonable complaints which women too often indulge in afloat. The wind blew fair, and at first there was not too much of it; the sea was smooth; and we confidently looked to making a pleasant voyage. The ladies were excellent sailors, and often came and stood by me, watching with much interest the signals by which I directed the man at the wheel, and asking endless questions about ropes and sails and what not. Nothing escaped their bright eyes; and one of the girls, a pale little creature, very pretty but delicate, soon learned the names of the men, and conversed with them so kindly that I used to know when she had been on deck by the softened looks of the crew.

We had been two days at sea when I observed signs of a storm brewing, and calling the mate with the inten-

tion of consulting him, I said, "I think we shall have an ugly night, Harper. You have sailed in the *Princess Royal* before now, and therefore know what she can bear better than I do. Have you any suggestions to offer?"

Harper was a rough fellow, but a man I trusted, and he replied bluntly, "She *looks* well enough, and was patched up for the voyage, but some on board will tell you, captain, that the *Princess Royal* won't stand much o' what them North Seas sometimes give a ship."

"Patched up! what do you mean?"

"Ask the carpenter," and Harper turned away muttering to himself.

I *did* ask the carpenter, and received information which rather startled me; but as I determined I would not let the men guess how uneasy I felt, I lightly passed some jokes on the subject of "death-ships," and made every preparation which I could think of for meeting the now evidently coming storm.

Do you want to know what a "death-ship" is? Sailors give that name to unseaworthy vessels which are patched up, heavily insured, and sent to sea for the express purpose of being cast away. The *Princess Royal* was suspected of being one of those doomed vessels.

As night drew near the wind began to rise, fitfully at first, but gaining strength with every gust. It continued to increase, and in a short time it was blowing a tempest, and the *Princess Royal* was driving before it.

I knew by the laboured way she plunged forward and reeled when a sea struck her that the old ship was in no condition to fight it out successfully, and I could not help thinking of the poor ladies in the cabin. At the very moment I was wishing them anywhere but in my ship, a cold little hand fell upon mine, and I thought a spirit had come to my side; for there stood a pale, silent creature wrapped in a white cloak, her face as white as the fur, and only the large dark eyes looking life-like. I was so taken aback I could not speak at once, but Miss Elfie did.

"This is a terrible storm. There seems to be water under the cabin, for we can hear it. Mother is so frightened. Are we in great danger?"

The delicate little creature spoke quite quietly, though she must have been appalled by what the moonlight revealed to her of raging seas and all the horrors of the storm. I cannot think how she had contrived to reach the place where I stood.

"You ought not to have come up. I will take you back," I said, thinking very little of what she had reported of water under the cabin, and only anxious to place her in a less dangerous position than the sea-swept deck. I led her to the cabin, where the other ladies were sitting in darkness listening to a sound which horrified me as well as them—it was the gurgling sound of the sea running into the hold!

"O captain! oh, what is wrong? what does this mean?" cried Mrs. Talfourd; and the two younger girls sobbed and put their hands in mine begging me to save them.

There is nothing that unmans one so much in the hour of danger as the knowledge that he has to meet it for others less able to bear trial than himself. I did not dare remain a minute with the poor things, for I could not explain our situation. All I could do was to beg them to be composed, and I promised to return as soon as my duties would allow; but they clamoured, "Oh, don't leave us here!" and all except Miss Elfie clung to me, so that I had to use some force before I could extricate myself.

Hurrying back to my post, I sent some men to overhaul the ship as best they could in the circumstances; and soon the terrible news was brought, "Sprung a leak—water rushing into the hold." All the hands that could be spared were sent to the pumps, while others pitched overboard part of the deck cargo; and for a short time the vessel seemed to float more easily. It was only a brief respite.

Before long Harper came to me, and, speaking in a low tone, said, "Another leak, captain; her rotten planks and timbers won't hold together much longer. Shall we get out the boats?"

"You can try," I answered.

One after another the boats were lowered and stove in. No boat could live alongside in such a sea, and I would not allow the last boat to be launched, seeing it was our sole remaining chance. The men were well disciplined, and they liked their officers, for we had been kind as well as firm in our treatment of them, consequently we were obeyed; and after the attempt with the boats failed, all returned to their work at the pumps, and continued at it, though I could see that they hoped nothing from such efforts.

All through that terrible night and the next day the *Princess Royal* lay half full of water and helpless amid those raging billows. We had cut away her masts and rigging to lighten her a bit, and the continuous working of the pumps kept her afloat, though how long she would do so we feared to conjecture. I contrived to go down to the cabin more than once to speak a word of cheer to the poor ladies, who showed more courage than many men would have done in the circumstances.

As night came on again we fancied we could hear the roar of the sea breaking upon rocks, but as we did not know exactly where we were this point could not be decided, and it was only when the man on the look-out yelled "Breakers ahead" that we knew for certain what was to be the fate of our ship. I went to the cabin and told the ladies to come on deck at once. Meanwhile Harper tried to get our last boat lowered. While

he was so employed, Elfie Talfourd said to me, "Have you got any oil on board, captain? I have seen it used to *lay the sea*. It prevents the waves from breaking. Do try it, or the boat will be crushed, like the others, alongside." I don't know that I thought her plan of any use, but something in the girl's energetic yet quiet manner made me put confidence in her, and I made our men bring on deck a small cask of oil which we carried for the lamps, etc. Knocking in the head of the cask, we poured its contents overboard, and in a moment the breaking waves alongside were stilled as if by Divine command. The small boat was safely launched, and the men crowded into her before I could get the ladies persuaded to trust themselves over the side. I did not wonder at their hesitation, poor things, for to their inexperienced eyes the boat must have looked a more precarious ark of safety than the doomed ship. Harper, however, without waiting for her consent, lifted Mrs. Talfourd in his arms and dropped her into the boat; then catching up the youngest girl, he sprang in himself with her. The boatswain took a second; and then, as other men strove to jump too, I called out, "Don't let any more in, Harper; you are overloaded already." But the men struggled to escape,—it was their only chance, poor fellows,—and the boat would certainly have been swamped, if Miss Elfie had not come to my aid at that moment. While I was striving with all my might to keep the men back, she

leaned over the ship's side, clinging by a rope to keep herself from being swept away. I saw the quick gleam of a bright steel blade, and next moment the boat, freed by a woman's hand from its detaining rope, parted from us and "struck out for dear life." A groan of dismay burst from the men left on board; but the roar of the breakers was now close on our lee, and each individual hastened to take such means as suggested themselves for self-preservation.

I had drawn Miss Elfie back to my side on deck, and securing a life-belt and strong spar, I fastened them securely to her, exhorting her, at the same time, to keep up her courage, for we would perish ourselves before we would let her die. She smiled quietly—I could see the heavenly light on her face through the darkness—and thanked me, but added, "Look to yourself, captain. Forgive me, but perhaps—perhaps I may make bold to say that you are not ready to leave the world just yet. Try to save your own life—do—that it may be given to the Lord. I am glad to be going home at last; and the way by which I go does not matter, since I am upheld by Him who rules the universe." Just as she finished speaking the *Princess Royal* struck. It was one terrible crash, and all was over. I do not know what happened. I remember grasping the girl's hands in a vain hope of helping her; then something hit me on the head, and I fell among the wreck of my ship utterly unconscious.

When I came to myself I was lying in a fisherman's cottage, and kind hands were ministering to my bruised and battered body; but it was weeks, nay, months, before I was able to rise again. And when at last a measure of strength returned, I found that though life was spared I would never be well enough to sail the seas as heretofore. The first time I was able to take a walk I crept down to the sea-shore, from where I could see the reef upon which my ship had struck. Not one of her old timbers was left.

The little boat had reached a safe haven, and some of the crew who had been left with me in the *Princess Royal* were also rescued; but shortly after I had been drawn from the sea there was washed on shore

“The form of a maiden fair,
Lashed close to a drifting mast.”

They told me that Elfie Talfourd's pale small face wore a placid child-like smile, and the little hands which had done such a heroic deed were clasped upon her bosom.

I have never forgotten her last words. They were more to me than many sermons had been, and I hope my life since has proved that I was not ungrateful for the life spared to dedicate to a higher service than it had been given to in past years.

CHAPTER II.

“ In cradle of the rude, imperious surge.”—*Henry IV.*



ONE would suppose that Britain's ocean-girdle were broad enough for all the ships that sail upon it to go to and fro without coming into collision with each other; and yet one of the most frequent causes of disaster at sea in our time is that of colliding.

It is frequently asked if colliding does not imply mismanagement somewhere; and the answer to such questions, I fear, is that three-fourths of the collisions which occur upon the sea are due to carelessness somewhere. How many precious lives and noble vessels might have avoided a hard fate if every man concerned had done his duty in the sight of God, ever mindful that great consequences hang upon very small deeds.

Early in January 1870 the *Black Swan*, a fine screw steamer, put into the Tyne greatly injured, having come into collision with another steamer some ten or eleven miles off Flamborough Head. The accident occurred

just before daybreak, but the faint streaks of gold flashing out of the eastern sea afforded light enough for observing the movements of the stranger vessel. She was deeply laden, and apparently making a course from the light on Flamborough Head to the Continent. The distance between the two steamers was wide enough to remove all fear of a collision, and it was not until those on board of the *Black Swan* observed that the other vessel meant to cross their bow that anxiety arose. When the two were in perilous proximity the stranger quickened speed and attempted to cross the *Black Swan's* path; but the rash deed failed, for the latter, going under full steam, crashed into the unknown, and in an instant the sea had closed over her.

Nothing more sudden, more complete could have taken place. The large, heavily-freighted steamer dropped down to the bottom of the ocean as a stone falls through the air, leaving no trace behind. Not a man rose to the surface, as far as those on board of the other vessel could discover; and no clue to the name of the lost steamer could be obtained. It was conjectured from her size that the crew must have numbered over twenty, and that she had come from a Scotch or north-east English port; but nothing further could be even surmised regarding her. That the whole blame of the accident rested with those who had paid the penalty for their rashness with their lives seemed certain, and this opinion

was confirmed a few days later by the statement of one man—the sole survivor from the lost steamer.

This man was picked up by a fishing-smack which chanced to be passing near the scene of the disaster after the *Black Swan* had made off in a disabled condition. The unfortunate sailor was floating on a spar, almost insensible, and it was found, upon comparing time, that he must have been there for some hours. He said that his ill-fated ship was the *St. Bede* of Newcastle, and that she carried nineteen men. With the daring of madness the *St. Bede*, rather than slacken speed till the *Black Swan* had passed, rushed onward to her fate, and before a man in her could realize what had happened she was carrying the lives on board to their doom. The survivor never saw or heard more of his comrades and officers. He had presence of mind enough to grasp at some floating timber, which bore him to the surface again, but he was too much stunned to utter a cry which might have been heard on board the other vessel and have brought succour. Alone on the sea, this courageous Englishman *kept up his heart* for hours with thoughts of home and dear ones dependent on him for all that makes life worth living. For hours he waited patiently, and we may well believe that those hours of awful peril were not fruitless, since they brought that man into close communion with Him who holds the sea in the hollow of his hand.

Another disaster happened not far from the same locality, but no fault was to be found with those in command of the second vessel lost there. The narrative of her loss brings before us a striking picture of the true Jack Tar at the post of duty.

The *Gambia*, a fine new steamer, left London for Aberdeen with a general cargo. Her crew consisted of twenty-nine men, and there were on board about thirty passengers, almost all of whom were sailors paid off from other ships, and going home. The date of her departure was 10th of January 1870.

The *Gambia* proceeded on her course well enough until the evening of the day she started, although it was very stormy and a heavy sea running. Passengers and crew were alike seasoned to rough weather, therefore few thoughts were bestowed upon the situation, and hearty shouts and laughter answered to the wild voices of the storm. Suddenly it was discovered that there was something wrong with the shaft of the propeller; and it was supposed that one of the iron plates on the after part of the ship was broken, for a leak was reported at the same time.

For a short time there was little difference in the motion of the *Gambia*, but later she began to roll heavily and refuse to answer the helm. The pumps were set to work, and passengers as well as crew toiled cheerfully at what soon showed itself to be a dishearten-

ing task ; for in spite of every effort the water rose in the course of three hours until it almost extinguished the engine-fires. The stokers stood waist-high in water, and when they could no longer reach the coal with shovels they threw large pieces on the fire with their hands. All in vain. With irresistible force the sea conquered all their efforts, and soon the fires were put out and the pumps useless.

Meanwhile the captain had been trying to run the *Gambia* into the Humber, but she had become quite unmanageable. Night came on, and the gale rose higher and higher. Two vessels passed close by at intervals, and signals of distress were made, but neither stopped. Let us hope that they were sorely pressed themselves, for nothing else can excuse men for leaving others in the position of those in the *Gambia*. All on board stuck rigidly to duty, and worked without pause until Friday morning, when it was too plainly shown that the vessel must go down before long. By the captain's command the boats—three in number—were then lowered and manned by the crew and passengers. This was done with the utmost difficulty, and nothing but the most dexterous seamanship and prompt obedience to orders kept the boats' bows to sea, otherwise they would certainly have been swamped. Darkness added to the perils of the hour, yet the boats kept well together and in the vicinity of the foundering ship. About five o'clock in the morning,

just as faint rays of light began to spread over the storm-shrouded horizon, the *Gambia* was seen to reel backwards, and, with her colours flying, went down stern foremost.

The men forgot their own peril for a minute while they watched their good ship founder, and more than one stout-hearted sailor felt his eyes grow dim as she disappeared below the troubled waters. Everything was lost which the *Gambia* carried, except the most precious freight of all — those brave, well-disciplined seamen. For many hours they had much ado to prevent their open boats from being overwhelmed; and we learn of what true British mettle they were made when we are told that no food or drink had passed their lips for twenty-four hours; that they were obliged to denude themselves of portions of clothing before they could hoist flags of distress; that they were drenched with salt spray and exposed to a keen winter cold, yet could bandy jokes with each other as they toiled at the oars

I ought to have mentioned before that there was one woman among the unfortunate adventurers. The stewardess of the *Gambia* had once before escaped drowning in a yet more marvellous manner. The vessel in which she officiated was wrecked, and over forty individuals were lost, but the stewardess and a few men were rescued, after clinging to the rigging for twelve hours exposed to the force of wind and wave. On this second occasion she was not behind her companions in exhibiting both

courage and patient endurance. And all were rewarded at last by the appearance in their vicinity of a foreign barque. The signals were seen and responded to, and about nine o'clock the *Gambia's* crew and passengers were safe on board the *Solon*, a Russian ship bound for North Shields from Finland.

The official inquiry which followed the foundering of this new steamer elicited a very important piece of information. In 1854 an act was passed providing that every screw steamer built of iron should be fitted with a water-tight compartment enclosing the after part of the shaft. Had this act not been repealed in 1862 the *Gambia* might still be

“Walking the waters like a thing of life.”

Not many weeks after that storm, which was fatal to so much shipping, another came to leave its bitter memories upon many stricken hearts. January, February, and March of that season will long be remembered as a period of almost unparalleled disaster to those who go down to the sea in ships. Yet amid so much that was dark came rays of light casting the halo of heroism around many humble individuals who distinguished themselves by noble actions during periods of extreme peril. And we may proudly affirm to-day that our countrymen meet danger and death with the manly fortitude and courage of their lion-hearted ancestors.

About the middle of February 1870 a disabled barque was observed driving towards the coast near Great Yarmouth. She had fought the protracted storm well, but a renewal of its fury found the men worn out and their ship too much crippled for a second struggle. As the weather-beaten barque neared the shore an anchor was thrown, in hopes that it might bring her up, but while the mate was directing his men to let go a second anchor he was washed overboard by an overwhelming wave, which parted the ship from her anchor.

Amid the roar of breaking surf, which beat upon her as if she had been its toy, the *Victoria* drove upon the craggy shore. The foremast went by the board, carrying off some of the crew, and crushing the captain to death. The remainder of the men got on the forecastle, but in a very short time the vessel went to pieces. Five of the crew then lashed themselves to portions of wreck, and were cast ashore and saved.

The unfortunate barque had struck only six hundred yards from the land, and the movements of those on board could be easily seen by the sympathetic crowd on shore. Yet though so near, they could not be reached by even the rocket apparatus, and it was impossible to get the lifeboat off in such a sea unless communication with the vessel could first be obtained by a line. But though this was not achieved, a number of lives were saved by the heroic action of the coastguard and

boatmen. By tying themselves to each other a living chain was formed, and wading through the surf they rescued those sailors who were floating on the *débris* of their ship. Only half the crew were saved, and these by the gallantry of their preservers alone.

It was dark evening in April 1870, yet large crowds were thronging the quays at Liverpool to catch sight of a stately Inman steamer which was being towed slowly up the river. The bustling tugs employed in that task were seemingly conscious of the interest felt in their work, and made as much noise as possible. Nearer and nearer she came, gliding between the lights of floating castles, and as the *missing City of Brussels* anchored in port a volley of guns announced her safe arrival.

Who of all the crowd of expectant friends cared to ask the cause of her delay when the good ship floated before their eyes; when they received from her trusty keeping the loved ones for whom tears and prayers had poured forth through the long weeks of suspense! Hope had almost died when the good news came. No wonder that the crowd shouted for joy and the guns belched forth a welcome.

The *City of Brussels* had left New York on the 28th of March with a southerly wind. On the 29th she passed over two hundred and fifty-seven miles of her trackless path. On the 30th, with a moderate breeze

but heavy sea, she made two hundred and ninety miles. But on the 31st the gale came on at what an old salt has tersely called "nothing short o' devil's degrees." The heavy seas belaboured the steamer unmercifully, and in the struggle she lost both blades of her propeller. She was then put under canvas, and headed south-east; and on the 1st of April she met a steamer bound for New York. A report of the accident was sent back by that vessel; then, relying on her own powers, and trusting to favouring winds to carry her forward, the good ship held on her course across the Atlantic. That her sailing qualities were well tested was satisfactorily proved, for she went under canvas—until towed up Channel—from the 31st of March till the 23rd of April, and reached her desired haven at last.

It is not often that we receive our sea-ware in such good condition.

On the 7th of September 1870 we lost one of our best ships of war. She was a turret ironclad named the *Captain*, after the famous ship commanded, at the battle of Cape St. Vincent, by Nelson. She was a sea-going turret cruiser, built in water-tight compartments, each turret having a compartment to itself, containing its engines, magazine, shot and shell complete. Her dimensions were: length over all, 335 feet; breadth, 53 feet. Her inventor was the well-known Captain

Coles, who was on board when she was lost; and she was commanded by one of our "crack men."

The *Captain* behaved splendidly in the gale of the 30th May, and she was considered one of our best ships. Indeed, she was called the "war-ship of the future" on more than one occasion. Some of the experienced seamen did not scruple to affirm that the *Captain* would be found wanting in the hour of need; but such evil prophecies were merely laughed at by others.

THE WAR-SHIP OF THE FUTURE.

Britannia, tired of wooden walls,
Said to her doughty men,
"Come build me now a ship of power
To cope with others' ten!
No foreign forest must supply
Her ribs of goodly weight;
But from my ore of iron mould
A form of giant might:
For I would have her keep for me
The name of Monarch of the Sea."

They built a turret ironclad,
From stern to stem complete;
Her armaments, her engine force,
The best in all our fleet.
With shot and shell they stowed her well;
No vessel better manned—
Five hundred proven tars on board,
With Burgoyne in command.
And *Captain* was she called, a name
Which Nelson's deeds had given to fame.

"Now to her mast," Britannia cried,
"My Union Jack haul high;

THE LOSS OF THE "CAPTAIN."

For though *this Captain's* iron bulk
Takes not the sailor's eye,
She is the war-ship of my dreams,
And of the future, when
Our ironclads shall quell the foe,
And deft machines, my men,
Shall win for us a fame as great
As that which graced our ancient state."

The *Captain* joined a lordly fleet
To cruise the Spanish bay,
Whose storms have claimed a royal right
From rovers grand as they.
"Now will she bear a searching trial?"
The admiral did ask;
And pleased, he saw our ship complete
Each well-mancœuvred task;
"Well done," he said. As died daylight,
The *Captain* signalled back "Good-night."

Then waves tossed up their ruffled crests,
Then hoarse winds clamoured high;
"Our turn has come, and *we* will test
Those ironclads," they cry.
But *Minotaur*, and *Monarch* bold,
Lord Warden, one and all,
Reefed sail, and though they reeled, rode out
The danger and the squall;
And claimed their right to rule the sea;—
But ah! the *Captain*, where is she?

Ask those wild winds and wilder waves
Which swept her low-swung deck,
And, like to furious demons, beat
The burly barque to wreck.
Brief time she trembled in their toils,
Or strove to right again;
Capsized, she bore *Britannia's* flag
Below the seething main.
And of the crew that did so well,
Only a score escaped to tell.

And did Britannia strike her flag
 From masts where long had flown
 Those vaunted colours of her pride,
 When she was forced to own
 That waves will shatter iron plates
 As well as wooden walls;
 That engine-fires, like snowy sails,
 Must duck to white-winged squalls?
 Now did Britannia own with shame
 That Queen of Seas was not her name?

"*Nail fast my Union Jack aloft,*"
 She said; "by right of birth
 I hold my title o'er the seas
 In face of all the earth.
 Though bulwarks crash on rocky shores,
 Though ironclads go down,
 Though war's array not alway leads
 To conquest and renown,
O'er what I lose, within the hour,
I raise a new unequalled power.

"The sea-kings' blood still courses free
 Within each knotted vein
 Of engineer and 'salt' who bear
 My flag upon the main.
 What if some ship that was my pride
 To Ocean dips her prow;
 If every squadron that I own
 Lay like the *Captain* now,—
 If scuttled every barque and boat,—
 My tars would find a way to float!"

CHAPTER III.

"Twixt the green sea and the azured vault."—*Tempest*.



HERE is a dangerous spot in the South Atlantic known by the name of Roccas Reef. It lies a little aside from one of the great ocean highways, and has proved fatal to many a vessel driven out of her course by stress of weather. The reef is seldom visited, but rather shunned as a plague spot, yet one wishes that at regular intervals a cruiser could be sent to reconnoitre such localities. Not unfrequently would lives be rescued if such relief were sent; and surely our ships of war could not be better employed than in carrying succour to poor castaway sailors.

The *Mercurius* left San Francisco for Liverpool on the 15th of January 1870; but she never reached her destination, and her fate was for long unknown. It was supposed that she had been engulfed in that wide wilderness of water which holds so much that Britain has paid as the price of her intimate connection with the New World.

The *Mercurius* was a well-built iron clipper, ably manned, plentifully provisioned, and her captain felt naturally proud of his position as commander of so fine a ship and crew. No misadventure occurred from the time the *Mercurius* left port until the 25th of March. Then a heavy fog came on, and in some unaccountable manner the captain lost his reckoning. How this happened seems a mystery, and will remain so ; but before a soul on board was aware that the ship was out of her course she was carried on to Roccas Reef.

The rocks are completely covered at high water, the only dry spot being a slightly raised sand-bank ; and even in fine weather there is always a mighty swell breaking against the treacherous belt of hidden rock.

Notwithstanding the heavy surf beating upon the vessel, all the boats were safely launched and left the wreck, but only one reached the sand-bank. The others were swamped in attempting to pass through the breakers, and no rescue could be attempted by the more fortunate boat's crew, who had enough to do to look to their own safety. Only six of the stout twenty-four seamen who had sailed in the *Mercurius* reached the sand-bank, and these escaped as by a miracle, for their boat was so damaged that she was scarcely kept afloat during the awful moments which elapsed while she was driven from crag to crag, and finally tossed on shore. Struggling, scrambling, almost suffocated, these men

contrived to reach the small portion of the reef which afforded a slight refuge from the waves; but it was some time before they recovered sufficiently to survey their position. And when at last they were enabled to take in the situation they did not find much to cheer them, though for the time they had been preserved from the fate of their shipmates.

The reef was covered with wreckage, telling all too plainly what those rocks had done to many a gallant ship. Nowhere could they find the smallest drop of water fit to drink, and very soon despair began to paint grim pictures of a terrible fate awaiting them, when a shout from one of their number drew the attention of all. Gathering around their companion, they found him scraping away the sand from some water-tanks which had been almost buried in the shifting sand. We can imagine what their delight was upon finding that the water in those tanks was quite good, although they had lain there for two years, having belonged to a clipper which had been lost on Roccas Reef at that time. Thus one of the most terrible of all privations was unexpectedly removed, and one of the men—a Scotchman, and a Christian—took the opportunity of impressing upon the minds of the others some of his own simple faith.

"I'm thinking, lads," he said, "that this *find* of ours is as much a miracle of God's own contriving as was

Hagar's finding of a fountain in the desert, and it should give us confidence in him. His eye is looking upon us on this speck of sand, and his hand can bring succour even here; so at the beginning let us resolve to trust him and look to him."

The good fellow's words were of infinite value at that moment, and were greatly instrumental in restoring the castaways to a hopeful frame of mind. With renewed courage they set to work energetically, and soon erected a hut out of portions of wreck only too abundant. Firewood was provided from the same source, and a certain amount of comfort thus secured. No provisions had been secured from the *Mercurius*, but eggs were found, and young birds. Frequently a prize was secured in the shape of a fine turtle; and fish were caught by the aid of a boat nail attached to a cord.

The patience, courage, self-control which those men displayed during the long time spent upon the reef spoke volumes for them. There was no grumbling, no selfish striving to secure individual advantages; each man shared whatever luck (or Providence rather) sent him with his comrades, and the contents of the water-tanks were carefully husbanded and equally divided.

A long pole was fastened to the hut, and an old shirt was attached to the pole, in the hope that some ship might draw near, attracted by the signal. For fifty-one days did those unfortunate six men watch eagerly, striv-

ing to hope against hope, yet knowing that no vessel was likely to sight Roccas Reef, unless she were being impelled by cruel fate to add herself to its number of victims.

The "coward crouching of despair" is not an Anglo-Saxon vice, and although these sailors were in such a helpless condition, without any tools but jack-knives, with scant clothing, with meagre food, and only the shadow of a hope that an ocean wanderer would come to the rescue, yet they actually contrived to put together two cranky skiffs (made, like their hut, of wreckage), and after launching these, seriously contemplated venturing to sea in them!

Before that last desperate hazard was made the *Silvercraig* passed within sight of the reef. The signal of distress was observed, and the ship hove-to at once. She was the first that had been sighted by the castaways during all those seven weeks, and, almost mad with joy, they hurried into their clumsy boats and reached the *Silvercraig* in safety. She was bound for Liverpool, and brought the men to that port. Of course, all hope of the *Mercurius* and her crew had long since been abandoned, therefore the pious mother who had taught one, at least, of those men to "trust in God and do the right," was rewarded for her faith as she had not hoped to be when her good son returned in safety to tell of his adventure on Roccas Reef.

The new year of 1871 had only seen a week or two when a ship named the *Megæra* was commissioned to convey a detachment of troops to Australia. The *Megæra* had been a valuable troop-ship in her day, but having been overhauled and reported unsafe, was generally employed as a store-ship. How it came that she was once more intrusted with the precious lives of many hundred men, and sent with them on a long and perilous voyage, is one of the mysteries which only government officials understand.

Wind and weather fortunately proved favourable for a lengthened period, so that the *Megæra* made good progress, and the fears which had beset many on board subsided, as it seemed probable that she would reach her destination in safety after all. Some of the old experienced hands on board, however, continued to predict *hard lines* for the *Megæra* when she got into the "heavy water" of the Indian Ocean. That the vessel was in a very unseaworthy condition could not be doubted, and those in command never attempted to deny that her position would be most critical if she were unfortunate enough to encounter stormy weather.

With that happy indifference to danger which is so characteristic of our soldiers, the troops on board paid very little attention to the condition of the vessel. It was none of their business; all that they had got to do was to obey orders, and make the best of every circum-

stance! This habit of mind prevented all panic or insubordination from occurring when danger threatened, and was greatly instrumental in preventing those evil consequences which so surely attend any default in management.

When the *Megæra* was crossing the Indian Ocean a gale sprang up. The sea became fearfully agitated, and the "heavy water," so dreaded by the knowing "salts," began to tell visibly upon the deeply-laden ship all unprepared for such emergencies. She laboured painfully for a brief period, and then a leak was reported, and a leak of such magnitude that the water rose in the hold at the rate of an inch every hour. By the energy of the well-disciplined crew the pumps were kept actively employed, and the water lessened in the engine-room. Many attempts were made to find out where the leak was situated, but owing to the water having covered the ship's framework to some height, also owing to the way in which her iron plates were lined with brick-work, every effort to discover and repair the damage was unavailing.

The storm abated, but the painful efforts to keep the vessel afloat never ceased. After days of unwearied exertions and harrowing anxiety the leak was discovered. One of the iron plates had burst, having been worn so thin that it bent before the light pressure of a hand. There was no hope of repairing such an injury, for the



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old plates were all so worn away that they could not sustain the necessary rivets, and the water oozed in between them.

On the 17th of June the sun came out smiling from behind the clouds which had shrouded his face so many days. The mist cleared up, and showed St. Paul's Island about ten miles distant. The *Megæra* was immediately put to her utmost speed, and in less than an hour she was lying at anchor in smooth water. Although all danger to life seemed over, the adventure had not yet reached its climax. A diver reported the iron plates to be so worn "that he could put his knife through them," the timber frames eaten away, the pumps choked with bits of iron, and the whole ship in an utterly worn-out condition; therefore the captain resolved to land the men and stores, and establish a camp on St. Paul's Island until help should come. All the officers on board, both naval and military, willingly seconded this resolution, and worked along with their men in landing the cargo, hoping that by lightening the ship she could be floated over the bar. But these efforts were unavailing, and the wind rising again drove her rapidly towards the rocks.

With great difficulty she was prevented from striking; but another danger arose with a change of wind, for the gale blowing off-shore with much violence carried the *Megæra* once more out to sea. The leaks gained

ground with alarming rapidity, and there then remained no hope of keeping her above water. The order was then given to head for the land and run her aground. Steaming at full speed, the *Megæra* drove headlong towards the bar, on which she stranded; and there she remained for some days, giving shelter to the men until they could convert old huts upon the island into "house accommodation."

Unfortunately the greater part of the coal and ammunition was spoiled by salt water, but all the provisions were saved, only small in quantity of course, and the thing to be dreaded was a prolonged residence on the island which had proved such a haven of refuge in time of need. All were put upon short allowance, and the limited rations were supplemented by fish and the occasional capture of a wild goat.

St. Paul's Island is described as "a mere speck on the Indian Ocean. It is two miles long, and a mile and a half broad. In shape it may be described as the rim of a large basin, which is supposed to be the crater of a dormant volcano;" and on this ocean oasis three hundred and fifty men existed for more than two months. The strictest discipline was maintained, and we do not hear of any misfortunes occurring to the little colony. When half their time of imprisonment was over a vessel touched at the island, and news of what had happened was sent by her, so that the shipwrecked men knew

that before long their countrymen would be coming to the rescue.

Lieutenant Jones, who had been sent for assistance (in the Dutch barque which had come to St. Paul's Island accidentally), returned before long with supplies of provisions, and the welcome news that two of Her Majesty's ships were on the way with orders to convey the castaways to Sydney. In due time these arrived, and all were safely conveyed to their destination.

The storms which had continued for three long months, with few and short respites, had worn themselves out at last. The angry winds dispersed before the May sunshine, and the ocean-girdle of our land, no longer fretted to madness by the tempest, rolled placidly onward, and bore gently on its bosom many a precious burden of human life.

A vessel nearing the English coast "sighted" a strange, forlorn object. No more lonely, melancholy object could be well imagined; for it was the battered hull of a once stately ship, and it was knocking about aimlessly under the glitter of sunshine that made its miserable, deserted appearance seem greater than it would have been if clouds and heaving billows had surrounded her. She showed no canvas. Her masts were broken, and the rigging hung over her shattered bulwarks. No sign of life could be observed; but a boat

was sent from the passing ship, and the men succeeded in boarding the wreck. Her name and destination were discovered, and some articles were taken from her as relics ; for it was soon seen that there was no possibility of towing the abandoned ship into port, as had at first been supposed might be done.

One of the sailors, going down to the cabin, saw there a most pitiful sight. Stretched upon a bunker lay a dead youth, and close by him a large dog, also dead. One of the boy's legs was swathed in bandages, which seemed to show that he had sustained an injury which had chained him to the cabin when his shipmates were abandoning their vessel. When and how death had come could only be surmised. The cabin-door was softly closed again, and the sailors went back to their ship, leaving the deserted waif with her lifeless occupants to her fate. Many conjectures were made regarding the crew. When had they forsaken their ship ? were they still tossing upon the wide sea, or had they reached some welcome port ? had the boats, which they deemed more safe than their water-logged barque, proved even less trustworthy than she ? Vain were all questionings, for they never were heard of more, and their end will not be revealed until that day when the sea shall give up its dead.

CHAPTER IV.

"'Twas pitiful; 'twas wondrous pitiful."—*Othello*.



ONE stormy morning in December 1871 a steamer was seen off the Scilly Islands contending with a terrific gale. She was evidently in a disabled condition, and unfortunately no help could reach her, for the sea was running mountains high, and even the pilot boat could not attempt to run alongside.

Early in the afternoon the vessel got entangled among the shoals north-west of Sampson Island, and half an hour later she was seen to strike on a reef close to the isle of Mincarlo. Almost immediately after she struck the steamer fell on her side and disappeared; and it was supposed that all had perished, but the chief mate and third officer were saved, and taken to the island of Bryher.

The inhabitants of that island had stood on the shore witnessing the struggles of the wrecked men, yet could render no assistance, and forty-six poor fellows perished

within a stone's-throw of the shore. To the credit of the natives it must be stated that more than one rash attempt was made to succour the perishing, but all in vain.

From the mate's account we learn that his ship, the *Delaware*, had left the Mersey *en voyage* for Calcutta, but shortly after sailing the wind freshened, and during the night it blew a fierce gale. The *Delaware*, however, kept on her course until her engines became disabled, which happened about the time that the Scilly Islands were sighted. Every effort was made to clear that dangerous coast, but all in vain; and the captain, standing on the bridge, was the first to be swept away. A heavy sea broke on board, smashing the bridge; and then wave followed wave in quick succession, giving the vessel no time to right herself. Finally, a sea yet more gigantic than its predecessors rolled over the *Delaware's* decks, sweeping them, and causing her to founder even at the moment that she struck the rocks. As the mate was striking out towards the shore he saw five of the crew clinging to a spar. One or two life-belts were within reach, and he strove to help his comrades to them; but the resistless waves carried him away, and he had enough to do to save himself after that.

Thus perished another crew of those hardy, high-hearted men who have made the name of English "tar" so deservedly famous; and unhappily it must be stated that

in nine cases out of ten such losses are the result of "something wrong" in the structure or equipment of the vessels. We do not put such thorough work through our hands as we used to do in the days when "English make" was guarantee that the articles so called were *sound*. Moreover, the "wooden walls" of former times cannot compete with our steamers in swiftness and convenience, but their superiority as sea boats cannot be doubted; and we feel inclined to sigh for the sailing ships of old when we hear, as we so often do, of how a short, wild tempest has made a speedy end of some fine iron steamer—a tempest at which the sea-rovers of a century ago would have laughed contemptuously, and in which they would scarcely have deigned to reef a sail.

The townsfolk of Swansea were stirred to unusual excitement one day on hearing that a brigantine, which had been riding at anchor in the Mumble Roads, was drifting rapidly towards the piers of the port. The western pier curves round the other, sheltering the passage between, and from that point a full view was given of the vessel driving before wind and tide. She had been secured by two anchors, but these had parted; and though others were let go, she continued to drift. The foremast was then cut away, but with no effect. One after another every spar was detached, and valuable cargo tossed overboard, but all in vain. The anchor

chains snapped at the bow, and the doomed ship, plunging past the west pier, struck on the east, and in a few minutes beat herself to drift-wood against it.

Meanwhile a shipowner of Swansea had stepped among the crowd, and eagerly called for volunteers to aid him in a desperate attempt to save the lives of the crew. All honour to the men of Swansea! They were not backward at that call, and a large party soon made their way on to the wave-washed eastern pier. This feat was accomplished at great risk to life, for heavy waves were breaking every moment against the pier and sweeping across it with irresistible force. But in spite of such difficulties a line was thrown to the wreck, and secured there after many failures. The men on board were all Frenchmen, except the pilot, who was the first to fasten himself to the line; but on trying to jump on to the pier he fell short. His head struck against the iron, the rope broke, and the poor man perished at once. Again a rope was flung to the ship, and this time was carefully secured, and before long every soul who had sailed in the brigantine stood upon English soil—saved.

Britons all over the world are not likely soon to forget the circumstances attending the loss of the *Northfleet*. A thrill of indignation passed through our hearts when it became known that some three hundred lives had been sacrificed—not through the carelessness only of

foreigners, but much more through their base inhumanity.

The *Northfleet*, an emigrant ship bound for Tasmania, anchored off Dungeness in consequence of the strong adverse winds which impeded her further course down the Channel. The date of her sailing was the 23rd of January 1873. There she lay quite snugly, and all on board were perfectly unconcerned regarding their position, which seemed one of perfect security. No one dreamed of misfortune approaching. The passengers retired to bed as night drew near, and only the regular watch was left on deck after ten o'clock, but all the *Northfleet's* lights were burning clearly.

About midnight the watch descried a steamer bearing rapidly down upon the *Northfleet*. The men on the look-out immediately shouted and rang bells, to attract the attention of those on board of the advancing steamer; but, all unheeding those signals, she kept on her way, and before an alarm could be raised the *Northfleet* was cut to the water's edge.

No sooner was the awful deed done than the stranger vessel backed with all possible speed. Her men threw a tarpaulin over the figure-head, so as to hide her name, and then she made off as fast as possible, paying no attention whatever to the terrible cries for help which followed her from the emigrant vessel which had been so recklessly destroyed.

It were vain to attempt to paint the scene of consternation on board of the *Northfleet* when, almost immediately after the shock of collision, a voice shouted down the hatchway, "Come up, all of you ; the ship's sinking !" It was too true. In the language of one of the saved, "there was a tremendous hole in her side, and you could hear the water rushing in like a river."

As is customary, the pumps were worked, but all to no purpose. The ship lay perfectly still, "but quietly settling in the sea."

Captain Knowles had been the first to come on deck when the alarm was raised, and he was only too soon followed by a crowd of panic-stricken creatures who set all discipline at defiance. The bulk of the passengers were navvies, uneducated, full of strong animal life, and with it the animal instinct of self-preservation. These rushed frantically to the davits to launch the boats ; but as each man was merely striving for himself, and obedient to no one, no order was observed, and though boats were launched, they were either overcrowded and swamped, or upset, and otherwise rendered useless. Captain Knowles vainly entreated the panic-stricken herd of strong men to hold back *like* men, and give the helpless women and children a chance ; but no one heeded his commands or entreaties.

Rushing to his cabin, the brave young commander secured a revolver, and advancing to the ship's side,

where a boat lay filled with men, he ordered them out of it "for sake of the weak." All refused to obey, and even the threat, and afterwards the fact, of shooting at them failed to bring the men to order.

Seeing that all hope of saving those in his charge through the exercise of authority was useless, the captain brought his young wife to the boat, and gave her in charge of the boatswain, who had contrived to secure a place for himself, and returned to his duty and his death. And then for a few minutes longer, while selfish men are struggling madly to save their own lives, regardless of those whose weakness claimed the first thought, we catch glimpses of this noble sea-king striving, with self-forgetful heroism, to rouse some feeling of manhood in the panic-stricken crowd.

Another boat is launched, while cowards crowd into her, and we hear Knowles call to them beseechingly, "Hold hard, men; don't go down!" but he is disregarded. Again there is a rush made upon the last of the boats, and she is speedily crammed to the gunwale with men alone; and over them stands the young captain, pistol in hand, shouting, "The boats are not for such as you; they are for the women and children!" Before the boatswain can cast off his boat, which is more than filled, a reckless multitude strive to fling themselves into her, and again the captain is heard saying, "Get back, if you are men, and let the women pass! I'll shoot the

next coward who attempts to come this way!" A brawny fellow dares the threat, and falls before the shot. This determined action causes the rest to hesitate and hang back one moment, and the boatswain is then enabled to get clear of the *Northfleet* just as her fore-end made the last and fatal dip.

Captain Knowles then exclaimed, "Take care of my wife, boatswain!—Good-bye, my dear, good-bye!" He was standing on the deck of his foundering ship, looking quietly at her as she went down, and he waved his hand to his bride. That was the last that was seen of this gallant sailor. Three hundred lives were lost with the *Northfleet*—

"But the noblest thing that perished there
Was that young, faithful heart."

There only remains to tell how the eighty survivors escaped. Of these the greater number were navvies, who clung to the top-masts, which were above water, and were rescued after remaining there for more than two hours. Only two women and one child were saved.

By some strange, sad chance the signals of distress flung out by the *Northfleet* were not understood on shore, nor did any one on board of vessels moored close by seem to know what was happening near them. Thus all those helpless beings perished who might easily have escaped death.

In days gone by, when Englishmen were apt to

wreak vengeance for dastard deeds done them by blows, not words, the cruel, inhuman conduct of the *Murillo's* men would have been avenged by nothing less than a bloody war. She was a Spanish screw-steamer, and although the evidence against her captain and crew was most conclusive, the Spanish authorities contrived to evade the course of justice, and the guilty parties were not convicted !

Hardly had public feeling subsided from the excitement of intense sympathy and indignation roused by the disaster which I have just narrated, than Britain was appalled by tidings of a yet greater catastrophe having occurred to one of our finest "White Star" line of steamers.

The *Atlantic* sailed from Liverpool, in March 1873, with nine hundred persons on board, the greater number of whom were emigrants. She had not left British seas far behind when she was met by equinoctial gales, which continued for so many days, increasing in violence, that Captain Williams decided upon making for Halifax, instead of New York.

Knowing that he was near a dangerous coast, the captain resolved to steer in a southerly direction until daylight. It would appear that he had not been quite certain of his position, and required to *see his course*. Shortly after he had given his orders, and retired for a

brief rest, the terrible cry of "Breakers ahead!" rang through the ship, and next moment there came a crash which made every plank and timber in the stout *Atlantic* quiver and start from its fellow.

Brief time sufficed to show that there was no hope left for the steamer, which had jammed fast among the rocks, and was deluged by giant waves that beat the life out of her groaning hulk. One huge billow carried off all the port-side boats, and as the ship heeled over with the force of the sea, her starboard boats were crushed against the rocks.

A short way from where the wreck lay rose an elevated rock, which seemed to promise a chance of escape, if only it could be reached. Between that rock and the shore lay another short passage. The raging waters which flowed through both channels were actually bridged over by the heroic efforts of three men!

Mr. Brady, the third officer, and two quarter-masters clambered into the mizzen rigging, unrove the halyards, and swam to the rock with the end of the rope. Having thus established communication between the rock and the wreck, they assisted many of their companions in misfortune to accomplish the dangerous passage, which had been made possible through the gallantry of that "dauntless three."

The captain and all his officers, quite regardless of personal safety, strove to save the passengers; and if

the boats had been available, five or six hundred lives might well have been saved from a premature death. As it was, the women could neither bear exposure to cold on the wreck, nor could they venture along the lines, and not one was rescued, in spite of every effort made to assist them.

The captain remained on the wreck, doing his utmost to keep order and encourage the faint-hearted. Each wave that broke over the wreck carried away in its bosom a freight of human life, and in a short time the survivors on board only numbered three. By that time some hundreds had contrived to reach the rock, and at day-dawn a small boat succeeded in getting to the spot and taking off Mr. Brady, who exerted himself to such good effect among the fishermen on shore that three large fishing-boats were launched, and all the survivors on the rock were brought to land.

Meantime the sea had risen so high that the boats could not venture near the wreck, upon which Mr. Frith, the chief officer, still remained, attempting to succour a lady and boy who had not been able to follow others along the line. The boy, seeing how the case stood, committed himself to the sea, and being an expert swimmer, also possessed of admirable presence of mind, he contrived by a courageous effort to reach one of the boats. Mr. Frith lashed the poor lady to the rigging, as a final resource, then prepared himself for death. But

a clergyman on the island, seeing their pitiful condition, volunteered to go to the rescue in a tiny skiff. Four men joined him, and the little bark succeeded in reaching all that was above water of the *Atlantic*. The clergyman then managed to obtain a footing on the rigging, and to fling a rope to Mr. Frith, who still clung to the mast. Seizing the rope, Mr. Frith fastened it to his body, sprang into the sea, and was hauled on board the boat. For the poor lady help came too late—she was frozen to death.

Less than half the number of those who had sailed from Liverpool in the *Atlantic* were saved, and these “by the gallantry of Captain Williams, his officers, and the fishermen of Meagher’s Island, led by their minister.” The date of the *Atlantic’s* loss was the 3rd of April 1873.

On the 2nd of December 1873 news reached Britain that a fortnight before that date the splendid French steamer *Ville du Havre* had come into collision with a sailing ship, the *Loch Earn* of Glasgow, and had sunk in twelve minutes afterwards, with the majority of the crew and passengers. Brief words are needed to convey most awful intelligence.

The *Ville du Havre* was bound from New York to Havre, carrying passengers and crew to the number of three hundred and thirteen. Many of the cabin passen-

gers were families going to spend the winter in France. Others were travelling for health's sake. Almost all were well-to-do, and anticipating great enjoyment from their projected sojourn in the Old World.

From the time the steamer left New York thick fogs had prevailed, but on the 20th of November the mist cleared, and a stiff breeze sprang up, which raised a "nasty swell." The night, however, was clear, and the starlight added its charm, and all, somewhat relieved from the anxiety which had been felt during the fog, retired to rest. The captain, who had scarcely quitted the deck since he left New York, went to his cabin about twelve o'clock, when the vessel was off the Azores, leaving the second officer in command.

On rushed the *Ville du Havre*, tossing the rough waters aside, and ploughing her way forward with a steady energy of purpose. Suddenly there came a terrific crash. Men scarcely awake sprang on deck, to find the bows of a large ship projecting over the steamer's bulwark, and to hear the rush of water making a way for itself into the hold.

The *Loch Earn* had struck the other vessel on the starboard side, amidships, cutting a hole into her deck twelve feet deep. The massive iron plates were broken through. There was no hope of saving the *Ville du Havre*, and terror paralyzed those on board, so that they made but feeble efforts to save themselves. At the time

of the collision the main-mast and mizzen-mast fell, smashing in their fall the two largest boats, so that the crew were only able to launch the whale boat and captain's gig.

The last of this fine vessel and her hapless occupants is touchingly described by one of the few who escaped :—

“In the stern-quarters of the ship a group of women prayed aloud, and took leave of one another. A priest, rising above all thought of personal danger in his heroic self-devotion, moved from one to another, uttering words of consolation and encouragement. It is true, though wonderful, that no one uttered a cry, no one showed any sign of agitation : that beautiful group of women praying seemed to inspire everybody with resignation.

“About twelve minutes after our collision with the *Loch Earn*, the fore-part of the ship sank under the waves. Next moment the remainder of the hull disappeared, drawing us all down with her, and how any one rose again I know not.”

The *Loch Earn* hove-to, and sent her boats to pick up those who were floating. The captain had remained on deck, refusing to seek safety for himself, and at first he was supposed to have been lost ; but he was picked up by the whale-boat, after floating two hours in the water. The first officer swam to the *Loch Earn*, which had stationed herself about a mile off the scene



WRECK OF THE "VILLE DU HAVRE."
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of the catastrophe; but the second officer in charge of the *Ville du Havre* at the time of the collision sank with her. Ninety people were saved, and over two hundred and twenty lost. Fortunately for both rescued and rescuers, other vessels were within hail; for the *Loch Earn* had sustained such damage that she foundered shortly afterwards, but not until all on board had been safely conveyed to other ships.

CHAPTER V.

"Into the tumbling billows of the main."—*Richard III.*



AT the entrance to a well-known harbour, in sight of friends, one of our new paddle-steamers was wrecked in 1874. This was the *Chusan*, intended for the Chinese service, and she had left Glasgow not long before on her first and last voyage. But she had not been long at sea when she sustained such serious damage that she had to put into Waterford. The surveyors there condemned her as unseaworthy; whereupon her captain resolved upon taking her back to the Clyde, where she had been built.

There were on board forty-six men, including officers. The passengers were only four in number, and one of these was Captain Johnstone's wife. The weather was what is so expressively termed *broken*; and it must have been a rash deed attempting to bring a partially disabled vessel among the islands and *bars* of our west coast. The sequel proved how wrongly her captain had judged in so doing.

There is an island called the Horse Isle, and a skerry known as the Crinan Rock, which lie like breakwaters across the entrance to Ardrossan harbour; and we are told that "owing to these obstacles the access to Ardrossan is difficult in dark or stormy weather," and what must it have been to a steamer which had refused to answer her helm and was very much at the mercy of wind and wave?

The pilot advised an attempt being made to gain the harbour, and, considering all the circumstances, there really seemed no more advisable course open. As the *Chusan* drew nearer the shore it became evident that her position was one of extreme peril, for the night was dark, and she was obedient to no will but that of the wind. How she contrived to clear Horse Isle in safety was a marvel, but straight in her path lay the Crinan Rock, covered by a few feet of water, a still more dangerous enemy.

The people of Ardrossan had been watching the steamer with painful anxiety, and when she struck upon the skerry a thrill of horror passed through the crowd. Alas! they could only "listen with aching hearts to the shrieks of the sufferers, whose forms could be indistinctly discerned." A steam-tug succeeded, after some delay, in reaching a portion of the wreck, and some persons still clinging to it were rescued. Then the lifeboat made a brave attempt to reach the spot, but was "beaten back by the furious storm."

The greater number of the crew were lost, and with them the captain, and it only remains to tell of his end.

A rope had been thrown from the tug, to which Captain Johnstone attached his wife and self; but as the line was being dragged along he saw that it was too frail to bear so great a strain: it had begun to untwine itself. Captain Johnstone immediately let go his hold, and strove desperately to support his wife until she was almost within reach of those in the tug. Then as friendly hands stretched over to receive her and aid the devoted husband, his strength gave way, and he sank back, disappearing among the "tumbling billows" at once and for ever. When Mrs. Johnstone recovered sufficiently to ask for her husband, she learned how he had given his life for her.

A very remarkable circumstance is recorded in connection with the wreck of the *Chusan*, and I cannot do better than give the *Scotsman's* graphic account of it:—"The aft-part of the *Chusan* went to shatters on the Crinan Rock, but the fore-part, which had been broken off as neatly as if cleft by an axe drifted off in the direction of the harbour. Passing between the breakwaters, it moved on till it reached the top of the harbour, when it took up a position beside other vessels as promptly as if it had been guided to the spot by pilot and helm." A great number of the *Chusan's* men were blacks, and almost all of them were lost.

A quiet tropical sea, a light breeze, a stately ship fully freighted and with her white wings well expanded to woo the winds, a clear starlight evening, no sound but the voices of the watch as they patrolled the ship, calling in deep manly tones, "All's well." Slumberers, relying on the orderly arrangements and numerous appliances to guard against accidents on board, have given themselves up to rest and dreams of the new land to which they are journeying.

"All's well."

Hark! what awful word is that which rings upon the silent air, rousing the heaviest sleeper and striking terror to five hundred hearts? "Fire!" The *Cospatrick* is in one moment changed from a scene of order and quiet to one of utter confusion. The captain, losing presence of mind at first, loses with it all command over both crew and passengers, and, though he soon rallied his bewildered senses, the time to make himself obeyed—as the man who is master of himself usually is obeyed in an hour of danger—has gone past. Desperate efforts are made in different ways to stop the career of the fire-demon, but there is needed one guiding spirit to turn well-meant attempts to good effect. That spirit is wanting. Alas! and "the flames fly like fiery serpents up every rope and spar, while the ship becomes enveloped in a shroud of white smoke."

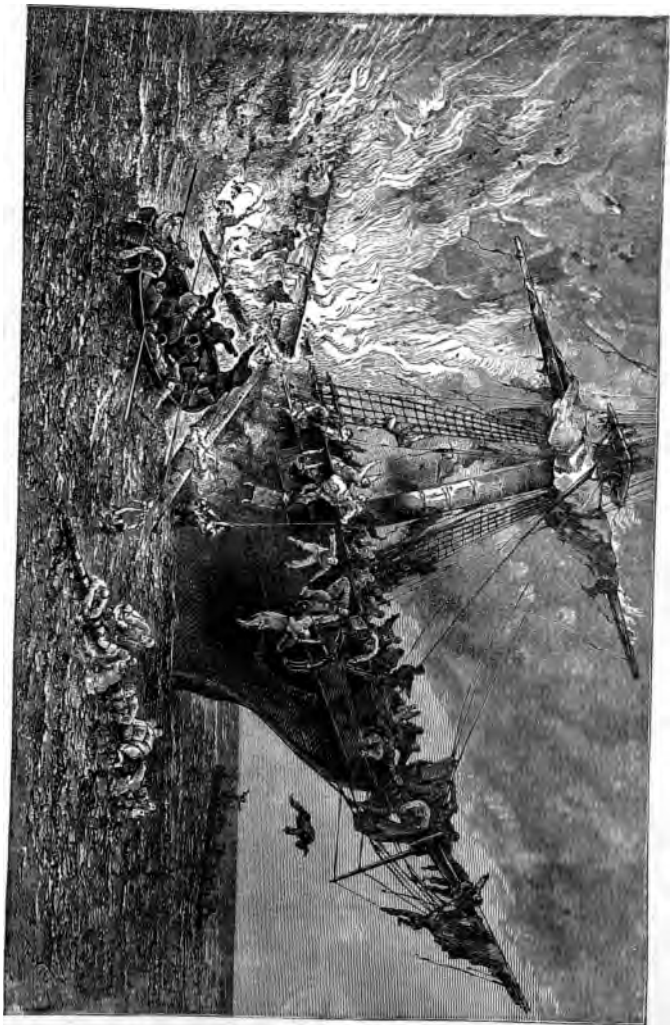
"Shall we lower the boats?" asked a mate, and the

captain said "No." Again the brave seamen attempt to fight the fury of the fire, but are driven back. Again they ask for leave to get out the boats; again the captain hesitates, and precious time is lost. Finally, without his permission, a rush is made upon the boats—to find that the greater number of them are in the clutches of the fire! One is lowered, and the terrified emigrants fling themselves into her in overwhelming numbers, so that she capsizes almost as soon as she touches the water. The port-lifeboat still remains intact, and she is got safely into the sea with over thirty people in her.

The mate Macdonald springs in just as she gets clear of the ship, but there is no time to secure any provisions, sail, or mast. Another lifeboat, much damaged but still able to float, gets clear also with a number of men in it, and the two hover around their burning ship—

" Until, burned through all her bulk
To the water's edge, the hulk
Down a thousand fathoms sunk
Suddenly,
With a low and sullen sound,
While the billows sang around
Sad requiems for the monarch
Of the sea."

What need to dwell upon the harrowing details of such a catastrophe? Nor is there any pleasure in following the fortunes of the two boats, for they became



BURNING OF THE "OSPATRICK."
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separated after a time, and one (the port-lifeboat, under command of the chief mate, with forty persons on board) was never seen or heard of more.

The second mate, Macdonald, had left that boat to take command of the other, and it was from him that an account of the *Cospatrick's* fate was derived. The accident took place on the 18th of November, and from that time till the 25th the hapless castaways had neither food nor fresh water. In their despair and wretchedness they drank quantities of salt water, which rapidly converted the greater number of the wretched creatures into madmen.

On the 26th the five survivors were obliged to have recourse to the last but one of all awful shifts for food, and until the 29th they lived upon the bodies of the dead. On that day they were picked up by a British vessel, where they were most tenderly cared for, and by which brought safely home.

Macdonald kept a diary during that terrible time in the boat, and no more pathetic record of sad experience is in existence. The very briefness of the entries, the failing writing, which day by day became less legible, the forgetfulness of exact dates, tell the story more forcibly than many words. Two of the five picked up by the *British Sceptre* died on board that vessel shortly after their rescue.

Such was the sad fate of the emigrant ship *Cospatrick*

and the valuable lives which had left home in her. She was bound for New Zealand; and who can say how many fond hearts on both sides of the world heard with sickening woe of the terrible catastrophe, which in all probability was caused by carelessness in the first place, and certainly was aggravated by lack of discipline in the second. And yet the regulations on board seem to have been most complete, and Captain Elmslie was neither coward nor fool.

We are fain to draw the curtain over a picture so gloomy and in some respects inexplicable.

The *La Plata*, a fine steamship of 960 tons, was lost that same month (November 1874), and her sad fate can be but too briefly told. In the Bay of Biscay she was met by a furious gale. Being overloaded, and with a dead-weight cargo (for she carried three hundred miles of telegraph cable), the *La Plata* lay deep in the water; consequently the heavy waves broke over her as if she had been a rock rising out of their heart for the purpose of rousing the anger of impeded surges. In a short time the fires were extinguished, and as the vessel lay in the trough of the sea one mighty billow swept over her with such fury that she suddenly broke asunder and foundered almost immediately.


Some of the crew, seeing how it was likely to be, had promptly launched a boat, and twelve of the men had

got in. Before any other boats could be manned the crowning catastrophe had occurred, so suddenly did death overtake the majority of the *La Plata's* men.

The captain and surgeon, who had acted throughout the time of trial with remarkable calmness and fortitude, were standing on the bridge when the vessel broke asunder. Making no attempt to reach the boat, which they knew to be overloaded already, they went down to their doom with folded arms, set faces, and in calm silence.

Over sixty lives perished on this occasion, but the boat's crew were rescued by a passing emigrant ship, and it was generally supposed from the account given by these men that they only had escaped. But a month later, news arrived of the marvellous escape of two more of the *La Plata's* crew—namely, Henry Lamont the boatswain and John Hooper a quartermaster. Their story is one of the most wonderful of romantic tales, and if it had figured in any work of fiction, would have been denounced as utterly beyond the region of possibilities, far less probabilities.

Hooper, although on the sick-list, had bravely persisted in steering the *La Plata*, and, being a specially good helmsman, had kept her going longer than would have been possible under the guidance of a less skilful hand. And at that post of duty he continued until his superior officer told him that it was altogether useless,



for by that time every man was looking out for a chance of escape. Seeing Lamont and some others get into the second boat, Hooper followed; but the boat struck against the foundering ship, and all were carried down by the suction.

Coming to the surface again, Hooper saw an air-raft tossing about, and he and Lamont contrived to support themselves upon it. Unhappily they were not observed by their comrades in the more fortunate boat, and in a short time they found themselves alone upon the raging deep. For a whole night and day they hung upon their frail support, half-submerged in the sea, without one morsel of food. Eagerly they gazed in every direction, hoping that some vessel would see them; but only one passed in sight, and she was too far away to mark such a tiny waif as the air-raft and its occupants.

Next day several ships sailed by in the distance, but there was no hope that the castaways could be descried. On the third day a large schooner bore down within a short distance, and the poor men shouted with all their might, but, alas! were unheard, and the schooner passed on.

During all those days the unfortunate couple had clung together for the sake of warmth, and "all their vague waking dreams and visions were connected with food in some shape or other." The sole relief which they had was in alternately chewing a medal which

belonged to Lamont. This token is described as "a silver medal, the edges all bitten, jagged and indented with tooth-marks. It has a head of Nelson on one side, and his heart-stirring watchword on the other." Well had those two sailors worn the name of British tar. Well had they acted and nobly in the spirit of the words, "England expects every man to do his duty," and in that long and dreary time of extreme peril and suffering they bore themselves as bravely as any one of all who won glory at Trafalgar. Perhaps when crowns are bestowed upon those who have earned them we shall find that the men who conquer self and bear trial with patient and steadfast hearts, as these men did, when no eye but God's is on them, will win the victor's wreath rather than those who have comported themselves as heroes before the gaze of an admiring world.

What little Hooper and Lamont spoke during that terrible time was of "home and friends, and God who had kept them up so long." Their greatest disappointment was when an American schooner came, as it seemed, within hail; for they could follow the movements of those on board, and—sorest trial of all to starving men—observed the steward carrying food across the deck. Lamont tore off his coat and hoisted it upon a broken board, and both he and Hooper shouted till their voices broke down; but all in vain. The schooner passed on, and, when the straining gaze of those ocean

waifs could no more catch a glimpse of her white sails, Lamont drooped his head despondingly for the first time. But the more Christian Hooper said, "We'll not lose heart yet; we are drifting into the track of ships, and we will continue to pray." And they *did* pray. "It was a little wild at times," they said, "but we always knew what we were about."

At last, through the gray mist of early morning, a dark object was seen approaching more nearly than any ship had done hitherto. When the welcome vessel was in close proximity the forlorn men gathered every failing energy together, and raised a cry for help that might have been heard at some distance. To their intense joy a bright signal of response was flashed from the ship, telling that their call had reached human ears. For two hours that glad light shone near them, but just before daybreak it disappeared!

Despair then strove to gain the mastery over those manly hearts which had defied it so long, but though the terrible revulsion of feeling caused deep pain, neither *gave up*; and two hours later the missing light bore down towards them once more.

The captain of the vessel had determined to keep near the place until morning, feeling sure that the cry he had heard proceeded from some unfortunate castaways. Guessing by the direction and force of the wind the point to which the *sea-ware* would drift, the

ship sailed in the same direction, tacking now and again in search of those who had uttered that most pitiful call for aid.

But now that they were found, a great danger had still to be surmounted. The gale was still excessive, and the sea in wild commotion, so that it was impossible to lower a boat, and dangerous in the extreme to attempt running alongside of the tiny raft. Signs were made for Lamont and Hooper to leave their frail support and swim to the ship. That was their sole chance, and after such a lengthened period of suffering they were ill able to make such an effort. But there was no help for it; so, after a brief but fervent prayer to Him whose everlasting arms were beneath and around them, the men plunged into the sea and made for the schooner.

Fortunately she lay low in the water, so that when they neared the side and ropes had been flung, kind strong arms were stretched to draw them upon deck. Their own power to do more than clutch at the ropes with their teeth was gone, and it was long before either recovered from the effects of that protracted time of exposure and peril.

Homeward bound! And now so close to the beloved native land—how hard to be delayed by fog! so tantalizing within a few hours of home! Such expressions were upon every lip as the *Schiller's* engines were

slowed to half-speed when coming up Channel on her way to Hamburg.

All on board were in high spirits, talking over the long voyage so nearly ended, anticipating the joys of reunion which awaited them before the day was over, as they fondly believed.

Ah! in one moment of time the *Schiller* drove upon a rock without the least chance of ever being dislodged, until, a shattered wreck, she was washed off in fragments!

Soon the passengers were crowded on deck, and, as one of her crew long inured to such scenes said, "the usual and affecting incidents of shipwreck took place." Mothers, all forgetful of themselves, pitifully cried to the sailors to save their little ones. Husbands and fathers strove to impart courage to weak ones looking to their home-protectors for support. Some individuals stood quite quiet, as if they were unconcerned spectators. Others evidently comprehended their position fully, but had no fear. A few were wild with terror, but the greater number wept and prayed. It soon seemed probable that not a life of all on board the ill-fated *Schiller* would survive, for there was a heavy swell, and the waves rolled over the wreck, sweeping its deck and battering in its sides.

Just then the lifeboats from St. Mary's (one of the Scilly Islands) were seen battling grandly with the




SCENE OF THE WRECK OF THE "SCHILLER"
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storm, urged on, in spite of tide and tempest, by strong and willing arms. The brave hearts of St. Mary's men had impelled them to dare anything, forget personal risk, and assist the perishing or perish with them. Hearing only the shrieks of the poor creatures on the wreck, and utterly regardless of their own lives, those men brought their boats alongside and took off over fifty persons, chiefly women and children. If time had been given them, what might not such daring heroes have done? Most probably all would have been saved; but, as the last of the lifeboats heavily laden left the wreck for the shore, a whooping billow broke against the *Schiller*, and next moment the sea "was covered with fragments of wreck, to which clung many a despairing human being."

The lifeboat lay not far off, but did not dare offer help to one of the drowning multitude, as she was laden to the gunwale and had much difficulty in keeping afloat. In a few moments not a human voice was heard, not even one "strong swimmer in his agony" appeared on the surface of those cruel waves. Three hundred poor mortals had perished; and a few days later many of the bodies were washed on shore and were laid to rest in St. Mary's churchyard, which is crowded with similar sea-ware.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Ships from far making amain to us."—*Comedy of Errors*.

"E were steaming rapidly ahead, keeping well out of the track of other ships, for 'our way was not the common way.'

"It was the dark hour before day-dawn, and the long rolling billows of the Pacific heaved with a subdued motion that accorded with the still solemnity of the sky above them. There were no clouds and no mist, nothing but the expanse of dark water and dark sky, and our ship the sole object in many miles of trackless ocean.

"I was standing on the bridge; all were asleep except the men on duty and myself. I wonder if people know what anxiety is united to the honour of commanding a large ship. I do not think that I forget, even when asleep, that the lives of all on board depend upon my smallest word or signal; and I am not surprised at being told that sea-captains do not often live to an old age. The *care* more than the exposure wears out our lives sooner than that of most men in other professions,

unless, perhaps, in the medical. But to return to the incident which you wished me to relate. I was standing on the bridge, having come up from my cabin because I could not rest, and chancing to turn my eyes to the horizon, I saw what at first looked like a flash of light from a cannon. But in another second it seemed more like a lighthouse lamp; then like a watch-fire on some distant peak; then like what it was—a ship on fire at sea!

“As soon as I made certain that such was the case, I gave orders for our vessel to hasten to the scene of what I feared must be a terrible catastrophe. The distance was soon got over, for the burning ship, we found, was advancing as well as ourselves. As we drew near to each other, the morning broke, and I could observe her better. The fire had not spread much to the rigging, which was enveloped in wreaths of smoke, that gave the tall masts a most ghostly appearance. Indeed, the fire did not seem to be spreading through the ship with much rapidity, but rather burning in a slow, steady manner. We fired guns and made other signals to show that we were ready to help, but got no response, and the ship came on with a strange, gliding motion that was most impressive. Her lower sails were scorched, of course, and torn, but otherwise she had no appearance of disorder. No sign of life could we detect, and some of her boats were amissing, which led us to hope

that the men had escaped. Keeping well out of her track, we slowed speed, and watched the burning ship sweep by with a certain sensation of awe and dread. She looked so weird and unearthly, sailing on majestically, with sails set and helm doing its duty, and no living creature to guide or control her. How far she had come we could not tell, but from the progress which the fire had made, we believed it would not be long before she exploded altogether. As long as she was in sight we watched eagerly; but still she sailed on, wrapped in smoke and flame, until distance hid her from our view. Of course we kept a sharp look-out for boats, but saw none, and the mystery of that vessel's fate is still unexplained, and must ever be so, for we could not read her name, and can only guess that she belonged to our own nation because of what we sailors call the 'English ship-shape make' of her."

A trading-ship called the *Strathclyde* sailed from London in February 1876, with forty-seven of a crew and half that number of passengers. A fair wind carried her down the Channel, and under its auspices the good ship made rapid progress, until Dover was left behind.

As she sailed along she sighted a large steamer following quickly, but not altogether in her track. It rather seemed that the two were "advancing in lines which

would cross each other" if the swifter steamer did not alter her course.

This she did not do, as was expected by the *Strathclyde*, but drew nearer and nearer, regardless of all universally acknowledged rules of the road, and in a short time a collision became imminent. The *Strathclyde* was steered towards the shore in hope of evading her pursuer, but all in vain. The German steamer "came down upon the *Strathclyde* as if she had been an enemy's vessel in time of war." The *Franconia* was going full speed, consequently the blow was terrific. She recoiled, and struck again, like an evil creature revenging itself for some fancied wrong, and a huge rent was made in the side of the unfortunate *Strathclyde*, into which the water poured in floods.

Backing off as the *Strathclyde* went down, the *Franconia* made for Dover harbour at once ; and although a few persons had contrived to swim to her, and begged her captain to lower his boats, or wait for a few minutes and make an attempt to save some of the victims of his own recklessness, he turned a deaf ear to all entreaties. Thus the greater number of those who had sailed in the *Strathclyde* were lost, although the weather was fine, the sea calm, and a steamer (the very one that ought to have been first to offer assistance) within reach.

It is some satisfaction to know that the captain of the *Franconia* (Keyn by name) was convicted of man-

slaughter, and his name will for ever be associated with all that is cowardly and base.

It cannot be doubted, whatever other nations may affirm to the contrary, that no Englishman would have acted in such a brutal manner ; and a few months after the loss of the *Strathclyde*, a collision of very much the same sort occurred, as if to prove how differently *our* seamen act under similar circumstances.

One of our heavy insular fogs was lying over the British seas, shrouding the narrow channels where a great crowd of shipping is perpetually passing to and fro, and multiplying the risk of collision a hundredfold.

An English screw collier, large, powerful, unwieldy, crossed the path of a Dutch trader, called the *Vesuvius*; but neither knew of the other's proximity until they had collided. A deficiency in fog-signals seems to have caused the catastrophe. Just as each crew became aware of the danger the vessels met with a mighty crash, and the Dutch ship went down at once. This happened five miles from land; there was a heavy swell on, and the collier was so injured that she was only kept from sinking by incessant and laborious working at the pumps. Nevertheless, she stirred not from the spot until all of the *Vesuvius's* men were saved. She was then so *far gone* that there was no hope of keeping her afloat until the nearest harbour could be reached, therefore all possible speed was got

up, and the *Savernake* was steered for the shore, where she grounded on the open Sussex beach, and all on board were saved.

In that case the unselfish and kindly feeling of our sailors was brought out in striking contrast to the conduct of foreigners, as exhibited by the *Franconia's* men. But not only may we venture to boast of our seamen's superiority in those virtues; in the even higher duties of obedience, fortitude, courage, and presence of mind, they have proved themselves equal to every emergency, which certainly cannot be said of those rivals who wish to rob the English of their right to call themselves *first* upon the main.

That same season (1876) we lost one of our best ships of war, but owing to the admirable conduct of all on board not one life was sacrificed.

The *Vanguard*, a fine ironclad, carrying fourteen guns, was proceeding down the Irish Channel along with a number of the fleet which were on their way to Queenstown. A thick fog came on, and the *Vanguard*, putting her helm hard-a-starboard, to avoid a large sailing vessel, came right across the path of her sister ironclad, the *Iron Duke*, which was following. Owing to the fog, the close proximity of the ironclads was unfortunately not observed by those on board of either ship until too late; and the formidable ram of

the *Iron Duke* struck into the starboard quarter of the *Vanguard* between the main and mizzen masts.

A tremendous hole was made, and some of the boats knocked away. The *Vanguard* was built with watertight compartments, but the doors all chanced to be open, and the sea rushed in. One of the crew, remembering this, sprang down and turned off the steam, thereby preventing an explosion. But the risk to his own life was so great that no one who saw him go on that fearful errand ever expected to behold his return; and how he battled his way through the in-rushing flood was not known, perhaps, to himself, far less to others.

The ship began to sink immediately after she was struck, but the utmost order and discipline were maintained. Officers gave orders as calmly "as if at practice." Men obeyed with quiet promptitude. Young middies passed up and down carrying the commands of their superiors as composedly as if they had been inured to the perils of their profession through a life-time.

In consequence of such admirable behaviour all the uninjured boats were speedily lowered and every soul safely conveyed to the *Iron Duke*.

There were four hundred and fifty men in the *Vanguard*; and we cannot sufficiently commend both officers and men for the *pluck* they showed on this occasion. In less than an hour from the time of colliding the

Vanguard heeled over and sank, righting herself, however, as she went down, "and groaning," the men said, "as if she knew that her time was come," while the water rushing in and over her made a noise like the convulsive sobs of a dying giant!

We may well believe that the four hundred and fifty men, who had so lately called the noble ship their own, did not look on unmoved as the *Vanguard* thus, as it were grieving over her sad fate, yielded herself into the bosom of the deep.

Although the similar loss of a German ironclad did not happen until two years later, yet I am tempted to record it here as a terrible warning of what must surely happen when strict discipline is not maintained, and little or no presence of mind is brought to meet extreme and sudden danger. We have seen how the exercise of obedience and courage, quick-witted minds and ready action, saved the men of the *Vanguard*. We have now to hear how the want of these excellent properties cost the German nation a loss equal to our gain in the other case.

A small but powerful squadron of German ironclads—the *König Wilhelm*, flag-ship, the *Grosser Kurfurst*, and the *Preussen*—was out in the Strait of Dover for naval practice, when a collision took place which sent the *Grosser Kurfurst* to the bottom. It happened

thus: In the course of the manœuvres a signal was made for the ships to form in line and steam ahead—the *Grosser Kurfurst* first, the *König Wilhelm* second, and the *Preussen* last. In this formation the squadron proceeded till within three miles of the shore, near Folkestone; and it was at that moment that a Norwegian barque was observed going across the bows of the leading ship. The officer in charge of the *Grosser Kurfurst*, obeying the rule that steam-ships must give way to sailing ones, at once gave orders for the helm to be put hard-a-port. Whether a signal was made to the *König Wilhelm* to intimate that her leader had altered her course or not does not appear. Anyhow, the second of the line continued her course, with the result of running into the first. Striking a terrific blow amidships with her powerful ram, the flag-ship cut the *Grosser Kurfurst* to the water's edge. The extent of the damage done soon became too evident. The blow had been struck in such a way as to make the watertight bulkheads quite useless, and the water soon found its way in in every direction.

In a short time the *Grosser Kurfurst* gave a great lurch off to starboard and went down. Almost all on board were too panic-stricken to do much towards helping themselves, and much confusion ensued. A number of the crew got into the rigging; and every effort was made by the *König Wilhelm* to save life, although it

would seem that there had been some unaccountable delay in sending relief. Life-buoys were flung overboard and boats sent off by her; and the Folkestone fishermen returning to port also gave efficient help. Sailing round the spot they saved seventy-two men. From some unexplained reason the *Preussen* lowered no boats. In half an hour after the lamentable accident no one was left floating; but until that time the air was filled with the despairing cries of the drowning men, and during the first ten minutes the water around the spot was "black with the forms of men struggling madly for their lives."

Our coastguard put off to assist, and were greatly instrumental in rescuing many, and one of their officers affirmed that if the *Grosser Kurfurst's* crew had been taught to swim they might all have been saved. As it happened, only two hundred escaped, and three hundred of their country's best went down with the ironclad.

It has been truly, if often, said that no more awful accident can be imagined than that of a fire on board a ship at sea. I remember once when I was a child witnessing the destruction of a small vessel lying at anchor. Fortunately the few men composing her crew were on shore, so that no lives were sacrificed; but the spectacle which she made as she burned fiercely to the water's edge, the flames like fiery creatures of every form coiling

and shooting up her mast and rigging, and tossing her blazing spars into the hissing sea, remains with me as vividly as at the time it happened. What, then, must be the horrors of a similar scene of destruction when the vessel is far, far out on the ocean, and many human beings have trusted their lives to her keeping?

The more noted shipwrecks of late years would not be complete without a mention of the burning of the *Sphinx*, in March 1878; but all the circumstances connected with it were so repulsively terrible and harrowing that I do not wish to do more than give a very brief account of it. The *Sphinx*, an Austrian steamer, was employed to convey three thousand Circassian emigrants when the tragedy I have to tell you occurred. They embarked at Cavallo, on the *Ægean* coast.

We are accustomed to think of large emigrant vessels—crowded with indigent folk hoping to *better themselves* by going abroad, and necessarily doing the voyage as cheaply as possible—as anything but comfortable means of transportation; but the worst of Irish or German vessels of this description must have been commodious, airy, luxurious, compared to the *Sphinx*, crammed to suffocation by thousands of half-civilized beings under no supervision or restraint. The vessel seemed to have been in no way properly prepared for her duty. She lacked sufficient fuel, water, provisions, and she was evidently unable to encounter rough weather.

When near Cape Elias she met a strong gale blowing from the south-east, and it was resolved to make for Famagusta, to replenish scanty supplies. But when the *Sphinx* was doubling the Klito Rock, off Cape St. Andrea, the tempest increased tenfold. Presently she shipped a sea which carried forty persons off the fore-castle. The vessel soon became unmanageable and would not obey her helm. An attempt was made to turn back, but it proved abortive; and the hatches having to be kept open, lest the crowd below should suffocate, it was feared that the hold would fill with water.

While the ship lay in this helpless condition, smoke was observed rising out of the fore-hatch, and in a few minutes she grounded on a sand-bank. The night was fast approaching to add to the horrors of the situation. Meanwhile the fire increased, and the confusion, and uproar, and selfish madness among the Circassians were awful. It soon became apparent that there was no way of putting down the fire, which evidently would rage and destroy until it came in contact with the element that is as powerful as itself.

The Circassians crowded on deck until there was not standing room on a plank or spar which lay above water. Fearing that the multitude coming up from below would push those already on deck into the sea, the sailors, with the consent and assistance of the Cir-

cassians who had been fortunate enough to escape from below, closed the hatches upon the rest, who perished horribly of fire and suffocation.

As the night wore on, the scene became aggravated by an attempt on the part of the emigrants to murder the captain and crew. These, however, contrived to escape in a boat, and were received on board a French gunboat two days later. In the morning the survivors managed to land. The number lost was estimated at five hundred; and the one consolatory circumstance in the whole of this most horrible narrative is the fact (almost miraculous) that the greater number of the emigrants escaped with life. Among those thousands we must hope and believe that there were many lives worth preservation, though the conduct of the majority would lead us to adopt a different conclusion. .

CHAPTER IX.

"Wrecked as homeward he did come."—*Macbeth*.



BRIEF telegraphic despatch which appeared in the newspapers of the 25th of March 1878 told us that our navy had once more sustained a heavy loss, and under circumstances so fearfully sudden and disastrous as to strike us with a certain feeling of awe. H.M.S. *Eurydice* had capsized during a terrific squall and snow-shower off Dunose Headland, on the south-east coast of the Isle of Wight.

The sad event has been so graphically described in a heart-moving poem that I cannot give an account of the loss in better words than those contained in Sir Noel Paton's stirring lines :—

THE LAST OF THE EURYDICE.

(Sunday, 24th March 1878.)

The training-ship *Eurydice*—

As tight a craft, I ween,

As ever bore brave men who loved

Their country and their Queen,

THE LAST OF THE EURYDICE.

Built when a ship, sir, was a ship,
And not a steam machine.

Six months or more she had been out
Cruising the Indian Sea ;
And now, with all her canvas bent,
The fresh breeze blowing free,
Up Channel in her pride she came,
The brave *Eurydice*.

On Saturday it was we saw
The English cliffs appear,
And fore and aft, from man and boy,
Up rang a British cheer,
While many a rough and ready hand
Dashed off the gathering tear.

We saw the heads of Dorset rise
Fair in the Sabbath sun ;
We marked each hamlet gleaming white—
The church spires one by one ;
We thought we heard the church bells ring
To hail our voyage done !

“ Only an hour from Spithead, lads ;
Only an hour from home ! ”
So sang the captain's cheery voice
As we spurned the ebbing foam,
And each young sea-dog's heart sang back,
“ Only an hour from home ! ”

No warning ripple crisped the wave
To tell of danger nigh,
Nor looming rack, nor driving scud ;
From out a smiling sky,
With sound as of the trump of doom,
The squall broke suddenly.

A hurricane of wind and snow
From off the Shanklin shore,

It caught us in its blinding whirl
One instant, and no more ;
For, ere we dreamt of trouble near,
All earthly hope was o'er.

No time to shorten sail,—no time
To change the vessel's course ;
The storm had caught her crowded masts
With swift, resistless force :
Only one shrill, despairing cry
Rose o'er the turmoil hoarse.

And broadside the great ship went down
Amid the swirling foam ;
And with her nigh four hundred men
Went down in sight of home—
(Fletcher and I alone were saved)—
Only an hour from home !

There is little more to tell of this noble vessel's fate. One of the two survivors said that he was more than an hour in the water. He had seen Captain Hare, among others, clinging to some rigging, drawn down in the vortex. Being a good swimmer, he had striven to assist some, but at last there were four holding on to him, and then he had to throw them off.

The *Eurydice* had left Bermuda three weeks before. She had been commissioned as a training-ship in 1877, and was returning from a winter's cruise in the West Indies. She carried four guns, and was noted for being one of the swiftest cruisers in the service. She had been quite newly done up, and was ship-rigged, destitute of machinery, being merely intended to enable young


sailors to acquire expertness in seamanship, and she was manned for the most part by lads who remained six months to learn their trade, and were then drafted from the *Eurydice* to ironclads.

A passing schooner that came to render assistance picked up five men—Lieutenant Tabor being one of the number—but all died from the effects of the accident except Cuddiford and a boy, Sidney Fletcher.

Shortly before starting on her voyage, the *Eurydice* paid a visit to the Firth of Forth, when many persons were allowed an opportunity of seeing how Britannia educates her Jack Tars. Little did those who so recently admired the trim ship and her orderly young crew think how soon they would be mourning their untimely fate.

No one *but* a Londoner can fully understand what enjoyment a Londoner derives from a day's *outing* in the country or on the water. It is a pleasure talked of for weeks, remembered for years. Such days come seldom in the lives of the middle class of metropolitan workers, and they are treasured as the green spots in memory's waste.

How many hundreds of such pleasure-seekers left home on the 4th September 1878 anticipating a day of thorough freedom from care, a day of innocent enjoyment. The sun shone fair, the traffic on the Thames was at its usual height of exhilarating noise and bustle.



The *Princess Alice* had run up some flags to give her a more than ordinary holiday appearance. All was good-humoured jostling and excitement on board as the crowd strove to settle themselves in comfortable quarters and prepare for a *good time*. Here you would see a vigilant governess collecting her girls around her like a hen with its chickens. There you would catch sight of a young couple married that morning, and cooing over each other in the approved mode. Yonder sits the pale over-worked mother of a dozen children, trying to forget her cares for one day, while around her the cause of all her paleness and her anxiety rampage in wild enjoyment of a day on the water. Leaning against the rail stands a group of undersized, white-faced clerks smoking cheap cigars and talking in nautical phraseology under the delusion that they are seamen because afloat. Chattering and giggling in a corner sit a number of pretty milliners—pretty, yet with the overtaxed look which is the painful characteristic of all “working” Londoners. Stout and jovial, laughing with hearty loudness, we see the well-to-do tradesman who has taken his entire household for a day’s pleasure—his sonsy, smiling wife and winsome daughter, his schoolboy son, and baby in the neat nursemaid’s arms. A little apart from the family groups loiter thoughtful-looking men, whose refined features and hard horny hands proclaim them to be that large powerful class of Londoners who are for ever

exercising both hands and head, and who take their enjoyments of life sparingly and gravely. It is difficult in such a crowd (over seven hundred people) to describe separate parties; but this we know, that they were all there to enjoy a day's excursion down the river, and the fatal termination of their pleasure, poor things, is one of the sad pages of our sea history.

The *Princess Alice* left London Bridge in the morning, and touched at several places of interest in the course of the day. Her farthest point was Sheerness and the Nore. It was a pleasant excursion: the scenery was varied and beautiful, notwithstanding the fact that art and not nature made the chief part of its attractiveness.

As the vessel steamed up river again the passengers chatted merrily of all they had seen, and, though some were slightly fatigued, all were loud in affirming that a more enjoyable trip could not have been. The various groups had got blended together in interesting combinations. The clerks had attached themselves to the milliners. The children had mingled in a game of romps. The mothers had become confidential over luncheon baskets. The heads of families had found mutual interests in the price of provisions and Gladstone's last telling speech. It had been indeed a pleasant day. Ah, well! perhaps those happy hearts were better attuned to the sudden change approaching than if a lingering illness had worn out both mind and

body until they had become imbued with the one selfish desire for *rest*.

It was six o'clock, and the *Princess Alice* had returned as far as the Beckton Gasworks, near Woolwich, when, without warning, without a moment's knowledge of what was about to happen, another steamer ran into her, and she began to sink immediately.

The scene on board became awful. The second steward said that he was in the saloon when he heard a crash. At first he thought it was a barge alongside, but a second crash sent him on deck, "to see that we were sinking." He rushed to the saloon gangway, and shouted, "Come up; we are foundering." He caught his betrothed as she ran past, and lifting her on his shoulder, leapt overboard and swam for the shore; but as he was striking out, the poor girl, rendered unconscious through fear, fell off his shoulder, and though he dived several times, hoping to recover her, she was lost.

By that time the steamer had gone down, and the river around the spot was covered with a struggling, screaming, gasping multitude, and the steward said he was nearly drowned by the maddened efforts made to seize hold of him. He was unselfish enough to linger near, and helped one gentleman. Swimming with him to a little distance, he kept him up till help came.

Alas! of help there was very little, for the bank of the river is thinly populated at that part, and there

of life became known, multitudes rushed to Woolwich and its neighbourhood — some to claim their dead, others to mourn for what the waters had kept, and a few to receive back with joy their loved ones.

Outside the balcony of a board-room lay the fair dimpled forms of four little children, picked up and laid side by side, though they had evidently belonged to different families. Happy babies! swiftly and at the same instant taken to behold the Father's face.

A little blue-eyed girl of seven was running about the shore asking for "papa." A boy of eight was found *stranded*, and when picked up said, "When I found myself in the water I just lay quiet and the waves carried me ashore!"

The majority of those lost were women; and it is most saddening to think that the light of so many homes was thus terribly extinguished through that disregard of rules of the road which is becoming only too common, and which should be punished most severely.

In November 1878, the mail-steamer *Pomerania*, belonging to the Hamburg American Company, was on the homeward voyage from New York. She had made a good passage across the Atlantic, and all on board were in high spirits at the thought of reaching beloved Fatherland next day. The *Pomerania* had come a few miles off the South Foreland; the weather was thick

were very few vessels near. The two that were available came at once and rendered all the assistance possible, but even before these could reach the spot the greater number of the unfortunate passengers had perished.

The water was as still as a mill-pond, the evening fair, the shore quite near, and if they had been able to swim, or even float, not one of all that five hundred need have perished. About two hundred were saved. It is to be hoped that the lesson will not be lost upon others, and that swimming will soon be looked upon as a necessary part of education. It is not only one of the best of all physical accomplishments; it trains the mental powers also, teaching (and to *women* such teaching is most needful) self-possession, moral courage, bravery, promptitude, and many other "first class" virtues.

The *Bywell Castle*, which had done the mischief, remained near to assist, and numerous boats soon arrived on the scene, but only to help to pick up the floating dead; for within five minutes after the collision all was still and calm once more. The *Princess Alice* was quite visible at low water, showing how easily a rescue might have been effected if— Ah, if!

That evening the offices of the London Steamboat Company were besieged by anxious inquiries; and then as the news spread, and the appalling extent of the loss

of life became known, multitudes rushed to Woolwich and its neighbourhood — some to claim their dead, others to mourn for what the waters had kept, and a few to receive back with joy their loved ones.

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and rainy, but a good watch was kept and the speed slowed. As evening set in some passengers retired to their berths, but the greater number beguiled the time by dancing and music. Suddenly, like the voice of doom, a roar and crash shook the vessel, and seemed to tear her asunder. It was the *now*, alas! old story. She had been run into amidships on the starboard side, and almost all of her boats were so smashed as to be unavailable. The captain seems to have been a man of much energy and self-possession, and his orders were obeyed at once. The passengers behaved well, a sailor said; but comments were afterwards made on the fact that one hundred of the crew were saved and only half of the passengers.

The steamer carried eight lifeboats capable of containing two hundred and fifty persons. Unfortunately the greater number of the boats could not be launched, and of the five that were, three were scarcely able to float.

The *Moel Eilean* (with which the *Pomerania* had collided) was so injured that, but for her water-tight compartments, she must have sunk. Her bows were quite knocked away. She remained in the vicinity, but could render no assistance whatever.

Although many were panic-stricken there was little disorder on board the foundering ship, and not a few heroic deeds were done. One gallant lad, believing that

all his family had got into a boat except himself, and knowing that she could take no more, cut the rope and sent her adrift before the rush of people reached her. Then finding that a young sister was left, he fastened her to a rope, and tossed her overboard to another boat. The sailor in command refused to draw the poor girl from the water. He "was overcrowded already," he said, and she was drowned.

One lady caught up a lantern, and guided herself and a friend to where a boat was being launched, and stood there holding the light that the men might see to get out the boat. When that was done they called her to come; so, handing her lantern to an officer who stood near, the brave lady clambered over the ship's side and dropped into the boat.

Captain Schwenzen seemed to forget himself altogether at the post of duty, and when urged by his men to save himself manfully refused. When last seen he was standing on the quarter-deck calling good-bye to those who were fortunate enough to escape, and it was supposed that he had gone down with his ship. He was, however, picked up two hours after the catastrophe by a passing steamer.

The *Pomerania's* splendid lights were burning till she disappeared, and when morning came all that remained visible of her were her topmasts and fore and main yards.

The boats that got away with one hundred and seventy-two persons drifted for half-an-hour, and were then found by the *Glengarry*, which hove-to till daylight in hopes of saving more. Unfortunately no one survived to need such assistance, and it only remains to quote the interesting narrative of one of the rescued, a little boy of eleven years of age. "My father," he said, "was to meet me at Hamburg. He'll wonder what's come of me. Couldn't a telegram go to say I'm here" (in hospital) "all right and jolly? I was coming over in charge of the steward. I've had disease of the hip-joint for ever so long, but I hopped on deck when I heard the uproar, and a sailor saw me. He lifted me up and tossed me to another, who chucked me into a boat. I wonder what granny in New York will say when she sees it all in the papers!"

CHAPTER X.

"The winds did sing it to me and the thunder."—*Tempest*.



HER Majesty owns a vessel which is known by the nickname of *The Unlucky*; and certainly, if ever ship earned for herself a name, the *Thunderer* has deserved that which our tars have bestowed upon her.

That she is doomed to become sea-ware we must not predict, but some of her exploits have entitled us to record them along with our other disasters at sea.

The men were practising with one of her thirty-eight ton guns when a sudden explosion occurred. Two officers and nine men were killed on the spot, and thirty were wounded—some of these died afterwards.

Before the *Thunderer* passed from the hands of the contractors a terrible explosion took place. She was sailing in the Solent at the time, and forty of her temporary crew were killed. That happened three years ago.

At Gibraltar she grounded, and her bilge-keels were carried away. At Malta an explosion of coal-gas caused

so much damage that she had to be sent home for repairs.

The *Thunderer* is said to be capable of dealing greater destruction than any other ship afloat, but as yet her great talents in that way have only been directed against herself. Let us hope that she will not develop any further power of self-injury, and that she may never have occasion to try her death-dealing qualities upon a foe!

"There's something uncommon queer out yonder," remarked one sailor to another, as they leaned upon the bulwark of their ship and strove to *make out* the strange object which had attracted their attention. "It's a boat, sure enough, and there are men in her; but what sort of a boat and what sort of men? There's the difficulty."

"And, as I live," exclaimed the other seaman, "*there* is another of the same—two objects! what are they up to?" But the darkness was rapidly falling, and there was a heavy sea, so that it became quite impossible to tell what the boats were about. And, indeed, others of the crew, who had not seen the strange objects, were rather incredulous on the subject, and insisted that the two who had were either spinning a yarn, or had been favoured with a vision of some sea monster.

The winds were adverse, and the storm increased so

much that the schooner was obliged to abandon her course and run before the gale until near morning. The tempest then abating somewhat, she resumed her voyage, and was courageously beating up in the face of the contrary winds, when one of the men exclaimed, as they neared the place where they had sighted the queer boats on the previous evening, "Well, I'm a Dutchman if there ain't them visions, as ye call 'em, just about where they were last night."

And certainly there could be no doubt about it; for daylight had come, the schooner was within a very short distance of the boats, and the sun is a bright dispeller of all illusory appearances. Boats they were—boats with rudders in their places, yet no hands guiding them, with oars drawn in and sails hauled down, with men on every thwart. Boats tossing aimlessly about that cold northern ocean, seemingly well-found and fully manned. The name of the ship to which they had belonged could be read. They were the lifeboat and longboat of the *Albert Edward*, and the men were twenty in number. "They seem all to have fallen asleep," said a sailor. "Yes, men," said the mate, who had been looking at the boats through his glass, "they are asleep sure enough; but it is a sleep from which there is no awaking. The poor fellows are all *dead*." And that was the truth. Some were reclining against their companions; some lay as if they had yielded themselves to

despair and death willingly ; others sat bolt upright at their post with white faces and open eyes, stark and stiff—all were frozen to death. The storm was still too great for a boat to be launched ; and, indeed, there was no need to do so, for not one of the score of men who comprised those two hapless crews was alive, or had been alive for many days. The water was well up in the boats and would soon swamp them. That their ship had *come to grief* was evident, and for them there was nothing to be done but to allow old Ocean to claim his own.

It is not often that we have to record the wreck of a vessel without having to tell also of the loss of life more or less. It is, therefore, with much satisfaction that I add to my tale of shipwrecks an account of the loss of the barque *Julia*, which happened on Fair Isle about the end of August 1879.

It may not be generally known that Fair Isle is a lonely rocky island which lies half-way between Orkney and Shetland. It has been a sort of trap for many a luckless sea-rover, and, if the truth were known, could boast of having had as many victims as the Goodwin Sands, or any other of the places on the English coast famous in the annals of shipwreck. I will quote the newspaper account of the accident, leaving the tale to point its own most evident moral :—

“The smack *Columbine* arrived at Lerwick on the

21st of August, having on board the captain and crew of a vessel that had been wrecked on Fair Isle the week before. The vessel was the barque *Julia* of Drammen, coal-laden from Greenock to Cronstadt. Foggy weather had been experienced for some days. On Thursday the island of Foula was seen for a short time, and a course was steered between Fair Isle and Shetland.

"Fog came down very dense during the night, and about eleven noon the vessel struck a rock while going about four knots an hour. Immediately after striking she sheered off, and in a few moments sank in seventeen fathoms water. The crew had barely time to scramble on to the rock, and could save nothing but what they had on. The rock on which the men found themselves is on the west coast of the island, which is quite uninhabited. After waiting for upwards of twenty-four hours, their case was becoming desperate, there being no signs of any relief coming. The carpenter then volunteered to swim to the shore, and attempt to scale the cliff, which was over a hundred feet high, and very dangerous."

We can imagine with what trembling hope and fear the group upon the skerry watched their brave comrade make the desperate plunge, for upon the success or failure of his attempt seemed to hang their lives. How anxiously—we hope prayerfully—did they mark his progress landward, and with what joy they hailed the accomplishment of his gallant feat. "He gained the

shore, climbed the cliff, and having reached the inhabited part of the island and informed the people of the circumstances, boats were launched, and in a short time the crew were in safety and receiving all the care and attention that could be bestowed upon them by a sympathetic and most hospitable little community.

"The master and crew all express themselves strongly of opinion that had there been a fog-signal on the island they would have had no difficulty in keeping clear, as the weather had been fine for some days and the sea comparatively smooth.....It has long been spoken of, and the necessity of having a fog-signal on this dangerous spot has been proved again and again; but, as yet, nothing has been done in that direction. Had a heavy sea set in, these poor men must have been swept off the skerry, and the fate of them and their vessel would never have been known."

Soon after this a lifeboat was stationed on Fair Isle, and already it has done good service. Let us hope that the much-needed light will soon follow.

The *Great Queensland*, a three-masted iron sailing ship, left London for Australia on the 5th of August 1878. She carried a cargo of general merchandise, thirty-four passengers, and a crew of thirty-six all told. When off Gravesend, a quantity of gunpowder was taken on board, also some detonators and percussion-

caps. Then the fine ship proceeded down the Channel, in spite of adverse winds and rough weather.

About the middle of August the *Great Queensland* was spoken by a passing vessel in the Bay of Biscay, some distance off Ushant Island, and since that date nothing has been seen or heard of her.

The beautiful ship with her valuable cargo, with her ten times more valuable freight of seventy human beings, has disappeared from mortal ken as completely as if she had been a bubble on the crest of some rampant wave. Eager, longing hearts looked out for news of the missing ship; wearily they waited, hoping against hope, but never a sign came for a year and four months. Then there came ashore at Cornwall a life-buoy with "London" and "Great Queensland" painted on it. The buoy had "full-grown barnacles attached to it, showing that it must have been a considerable time in the water." But not much importance was attached to this relic, as there was the possibility that it might have been washed overboard. On the 5th of January 1880 a board drifted ashore in a cove at Portland Island, and this board had the word "Queensland" on it. It was painted, and had not been wrenched from its place, for the screw holes were quite perfect, as though it had been left loose and been washed away. A fortnight later, half a buoy, with "Great Queensland" painted on it, came ashore in Salcombe Harbour. And that is all. Do those relics tell that the

ship is lost? Certainly not; and yet they seem like mute farewells from her—pathetic memorials, for she has never been heard of since the 12th of August 1878; and although an official inquiry has been made, no light has as yet fallen upon her fate. Yet that she has been lost no one now doubts; and vain must be every conjecture, for the sea will not tell us which of our surmises is the correct one, and we can only draw our conclusions from such morsels of sea-ware as the ocean chooses to cast up.

It was supposed that the *Great Queensland* had foundered during a storm, but that theory “was carefully examined and disproved,” as she was well-found, thoroughly seaworthy, and in every way prepared to meet rough weather.

During the investigation, attention became particularly directed to the explosives on board, “especially to some blasting powder.” This powder was said to be of prodigious strength—five times stronger than the ordinary blasting powder, and more rapid in combustion. In an account which has been published of the inquiry, it is stated that this powder “is made from wood, by a process similar to that by which gun-cotton is manufactured. Among the powder and other explosive materials on board the *Great Queensland* were two tons of this wood-powder, and it was on the quality of this part of the cargo that the chief portion of the inquiry before the Wreck Commissioners turned.

“Major Majendie had on one or two occasions condemned the powder sent out from these works as imperfectly made, and therefore unsafe. And the company’s counsel before the commissioners said that a former manager made the appalling statement that he never applied any test at all; that it was a regular rule of thumb; and that, in fact, he made his powder first, and put his trust in Providence afterwards, and whether he blew up anybody was a perfect matter of chance!

“Some of the powder thus imperfectly made was being remade in the early part of last year, when an order for two tons came from Australia. That quantity of the remade powder was consequently done up in inch and inch-and-a-quarter cartridges, and shipped on board the *Great Queensland*. The report of the Wreck Commissioners leaves it morally certain that the *Great Queensland* was blown up in the Bay of Biscay by the explosion of four-and-thirty tons of powder. The wood-powder ignited, and blew up all the rest, and there is no reason to wonder that three loose articles are all the traces of the ship which have ever come to land.”

If this was indeed how the *Great Queensland* was lost, it was no accident at all;—

“It was not in the battle;
No tempest gave the shock;
She sprang no fatal leak;
She ran upon no rock.”

It was simply a case of shameful, culpable carelessness,

for which *some one* is responsible, and should suffer well-merited punishment.

It is said that one day in August 1878 some persons on the coast of Spain heard a deep booming noise echoing across the sea like the sound of distant battle. If that mysterious sound was what people believe it to have been, then indeed the *Great Queensland*, passengers, crew, and cargo, were scattered to the winds and waves by one of the most sudden, most tremendous explosions that can be imagined, and we shall never see another relic of them. No more terrible catastrophe could have happened upon the deep; and the one dreary consolation that we have is, that "the destruction would be so instantaneous and complete that none of the persons on board would know what had happened."

With this "sorrow's crown of sorrow" closes our decade of shipwrecks—a sad picture, with few gleams of light to brighten up its sombre tints. Yet most useful lessons are to be found in each melancholy tale. Nor must we for one moment doubt that He who *permits* such seeming waste of human life sees a reason for it all, and brings good out of apparent evil.

And though the sea is such a fruitful source of pain and parting, of suffering and sorrow to us, we yet love its deep waters as our fathers did; and when we think of the happy future existence which is promised to God's people—when we dwell upon scriptural pic-

tures of the new heavens and new earth—we are fain
to say to the sea, with an eminent hymn-writer,—

"Only that which mars thy beauty,
Only *that* shall pass away—
Sullen wilds of ocean-moorland,
Bloated features of decay.

"Only that dark waste of waters
Line ne'er fathomed, eye ne'er scanned
Only that shall shrink and vanish,
Yielding back imprisoned land;

"Leaving still bright azure ranges,
Winding round this rocky tower;
Leaving still yon gem-bright island,
Sparkling like an ocean-flower.

"Only all of gloom and horror,
Idle wastes of endless brine,
Haunts of darkness, storm, and danger—
These shall be no longer thine.

"Backward ebbing, wave and ripple,
Wondrous scenes shall then disclose;
And, like earth's, the wastes of ocean
Then shall blossom like the rose."

THE END.

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